LESTER THUROW:
WHAT'S WRONG WITH
OUR ECONOMY

1981 $3.50

PARTISAN REVIEW/3

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
STATEN ISLAND CAMPUS
JUL 16 1981
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Ronald Hayman
Kafka and the Mice

Gerald Holton
Young Man Oppenheimer

Andrew Graham-Yooll
A Matter of Fear

Leon Botstein
Imitative Literacy

Morris Dickstein
Paris Letter

Henry Lowenfeld
Psychoanalysis Today

Allan Silver
The Lawyer and the Scrivener

Jules Olitski
On Dance

A Conversation with Arthur Berger by Jane Coppock

Fiction
Stephen O'Connor
Michael Malone

Poetry
Gilbert Sorrentino, Brian Swann,
Anne Waldman, Judith Yamamoto

Reviews
Eugene Goodheart
John Hollander
Lynne Lawner
Peter Loewenberg

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Politics of Reproduction

Mary O'Brien

'Mary O'Brien's critique of de Beauvoir, Millett, Rowbotham, Reed, Arendt, strikes me as eminently fair and relevant. She is convincing in her demonstration of the parochialism of male political theory to date and of the need for correcting it by including female experience on the basis of the interdisciplinary approach. The book is feminist but not "feminine." Its scholarship and erudition are impeccable.' —Jessie Bernard

This book focuses centrally on the nature and difference of male and female experience of biological reproduction, and upon the impact of male reproductive experience on the theory and practice of politics. $20.00

Untying the Text

A Post-Structuralist Anthology
Edited by Robert Young

Contributors include Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Pierre Macherey, Michael Riffaterre, Maud Ellmann, Ann Wordsworth, J. Hillis Miller

In recent years the controversial 'structuralist' movement has fragmented into the even more controversial 'post-structuralist' movement. This anthology presents a large and representative selection of the most important work that has been done in this area. $19.95, paper $9.95

Working with Structuralism

Essays and Reviews on Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Literature
David Lodge

The articles gathered here represent the author's attempt to assimilate the influence of structuralism without paying the price of incomprehensibility to all but a small group of initiates. The authors and topics discussed range from Thomas Hardy to Tom Wolfe and from the poetics of fiction to the poetry of Psychobabble. $30.00

Proust's 'Recherche'

A Psychoanalytic Interpretation
Randolph Splitter

Instead of tryingto force the text into a rigid theoretical structure, this reading of Proust's novel seeks to illuminate it by confronting and re-examining the problems that Freudian theory itself addresses, also taking into account the findings of modern French psychoanalysis and literary criticism. $20.00

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL
9 Park Street, Boston, Mass. 02108

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PARTISAN REVIEW

William Phillips, EDITOR

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Edith Kurzweil
Steven Marcus

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Kathleen Agena
Julia Prewitt Brown
Elizabeth Fox-Genovese
Barbara Rosecrance

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE
Joan C. Schwartz

STAFF
Maura J. Carey

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Estelle Leontief

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Peter Brooks
Morris Dickstein

CONSULTANTS
John Ashbery
Norman Birnbaum
Richard Gilman
Frank Kermode
Christopher Lasch
Barbara Rose
Susan Sontag
Stephen Spender

PUBLICATIONS AND ADVISORY BOARD
Edward E. Booher
Lillian Braude
Carter Burden
Cynthia G. Colin
Joan Ganz Cooney
H. William Fitelson
Gerald J. Gross
Marjorie Iseman
Shirley Johnson Lans
Vera List
Eugene Meyer
Robert H. Montgomery, Jr.
Lynn Nesbit
David B. Pearce, M.D.
Joanna S. Rose
Alan Silverman
Roger L. Stevens
Robert Wechsler

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Paul Kurt Ackermann, Paul Delany, Leslie Epstein, Eugene Goodheart, Lawrence Graver, Donald Marshall, Leonard Michaels, John Romano, Neil Schmitz, Roger Shattuck, Mark Shechner, Philip Stevick, Alan Trachtenberg

PARTISAN REVIEW, published quarterly by PR, Inc., is at Boston University, 121 Bay State Rd., Boston, MA 02215 and at 522 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10036. Subscriptions $12.50 a year, $23.00 for two years, $32.50 for 3 years; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $14.25 a year, $26.25 for two years; institutions, $18.00 for one year. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency. Single copy: $3.50. No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury. Copyright © 1981 by P.R., Inc. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional entries.

Distributed in the U.S.A. by DeBoer, Nutley, NJ 07710, Capitol News, Boston 02120, L-S Distribution, San Francisco 94109, Guild News Agency, Chicago 60614, Skylo, Seattle 98122, Southwest Literary Express, Las Cruces, NM 88001.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coming in

PARTISAN REVIEW

- **Daniel Bell on First Love and Early Sorrows**
- **Steven Marcus on the Revival and Revision of Freud**
- **Morris Dickstein on the New Realism**
- **Norman Cantor on the Rockefeller Report**
- **Richard Gilman on the Movies**
- **Arthur A. Cohen on Kafka's Prague**
- **John E. Woods's translations of Arno Schmidt**
- **Interviews with Donald Barthelme, José Donoso, Alberto Moravia, and Susan Sontag**

Subscribe now to PARTISAN REVIEW!

PARTISAN REVIEW
c/o Boston University, 121 Bay State Rd., Boston, MA 02215

☐ Enter my subscription
☐ 1 year at $12.50
☐ 1 year at $11.00 (student rate)*
☐ Institutional rate $18.00

☐ Extend my subscription
☐ 2 years at $23.00
☐ 2 years at $20.00 (student rate)*
☐ 3 years at $32.50

☐ Please bill me
☐ My check is enclosed

☐ Mastercharge _____ card # _____ expiration date
☐ VISA _____ card # _____ expiration date

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*I am a student at _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PR3 1981-VOLUME XLVIII NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

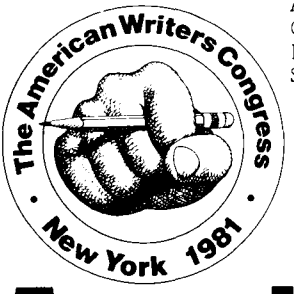
NOTES		**336**
ARTICLES		
Lester Thurow	*What's Wrong With Our Economy*	**337**
Ronald Hayman	*Kafka and the Mice*	**355**
Jane Coppock	*A Conversation with Arthur Berger*	**366**
Gerald Holton	*Young Man Oppenheimer*	**380**
Andrew Graham-Yooll	*A Matter of Fear*	**389**
Leon Botstein	*Imitative Literacy*	**399**
Allan Silver	*The Lawyer and the Scrivener*	**409**
Morris Dickstein	*Paris Letter*	**425**
FICTION		
Stephen O'Connor	*On the Wing*	**431**
Michael Malone	*High School Losers*	**438**
COMMENTS		
Henry Lowenfeld	*Psychoanalysis Today*	**446**
Jules Olitski	*On Dance*	**456**
POEMS		**458**
Gilbert Sorrentino, Brian Swann, Anne Waldman, Judith Yamamoto		

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Peter Loewenberg	*Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* by Carl E. Schorske	**463**
Eugene Goodheart	*Lionel Trilling* by William M. Chace	**469**
John Hollander	*Celestial Pantomime* by Justus George Lawler	**478**
Lynne Lawner	*Comrade and Lover* edited by Elżbieta Ettinger	**485**

Join with The Nation Institute and thousands of other writers at THE AMERICAN WRITERS CONGRESS, OCTOBER 9-12, 1981 at the ROOSEVELT HOTEL, NEW YORK. Partial list of sponsors includes: E. L. Doctorow, Frances FitzGerald, Kurt Vonnegut, John Hersey, Ishmael Reed, Nancy Milford, Donald Barthelme, Ann Bernays, Robert K. Massie, Peter Stone, Maxine Kumin, Gregory Rabassa, Betty Friedan, June Jordan, Toni Morrison, Denise Levertov, Francine duPlessix Gray, Eliot Fremont-Smith, John Kenneth Galbraith, David Mamet, Nora Ephron, Studs Terkel.



A call to the American Writers Congress

For more information, write to
The American Writers Congress,
G.P.O. Box 1215, New York, NY 10116
or call 212/420-0608.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You don't have to be a Bostonian to read the

New Boston Review

Clive James
The Critic in Arms

Frances Fitzgerald
Remembering Vietnam

Howard Gardner
The Piaget–Chomsky Debate

Helen Vendler
I.A. Richards at Harvard

interviews with
Mark Strand, Tim O'Brien,
Charles Rosen, Frederick Wiseman

and poems by
Octavio Paz, Charles Simic, Rachel Hadas

Boston Critic Inc., 10B Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA. 02138.
Enclosed is ☐ 1 year $4.50 (6 issues) ☐ 2 years $8.00 (12 issues)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES

LESTER THUROW is the author of *The Zero-Sum Society*. . . . **RONALD HAYMAN**'s biography of Kafka will be published this fall. . . . **JANE COPPOCK** is writing a study of Beethoven's later work. . . . **GERALD HOLTON** was the Jefferson Lecturer this year. . . . **ANDREW GRAHAM-YOOLL** is an editor of *The Guardian*, London. . . . **LEON BOTSTEIN** is President of Bard College. . . . **ALLAN SILVER** teaches at Columbia University. . . . **MORRIS DICKSTEIN** recently spent several months as a visiting professor of American Studies at the University of Paris VIII. . . . "On the Wing" is **STEPHEN O'CONNOR**'s first published story. . . . **MICHAEL MALONE**'s novel *Dingley Falls* will appear in paperback this summer. . . . **HENRY LOWENFELD** is a member of the faculty of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. . . . Painter and sculptor **JULES OLITSKI** is writing a novel. . . . *Crystal Vision*, a new novel by **GILBERT SORRENTINO** will come out this year. . . . **BRIAN SWANN** is editing *Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Literature*. . . . With Allen Ginsberg, **ANNE WALDMAN** co-directs the poetics program at Naropa Institute. . . . **JUDITH YAMAMOTO** recently received the Ina Coolbrith poetry award. . . . A professor of history at UCLA, **PETER LOEWENBERG** is also a faculty member of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute. . . . **EUGENE GOODHEART** is a professor of English at Boston University. . . . **JOHN HOLLANDER**'s *The Figure of Echo* and *Rhyme's Reason* will both appear this fall. . . . Poet and translator **LYNNE LAWNER** will be lecturing at Yale.

Note: The contributor's note for Roberta Satow in our #2 1981 issue should read: Roberta Satow teaches sociology at Brooklyn College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lester Thurow

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR ECONOMY

LESTER THUROW: I suppose we could try to put our current economic situation in context by imagining it is November 2, right before the election. The average American household on that day had something like an $18,000 per year income. With 2.7 people in that household and 1.4 workers, the primary wage-earner made $13,000 and the secondary wage-earner made $5,000, and that family had no income from capital. But the economic status of that $18,000 household was rising until the first quarter of 1979. Ever since then, however, the real income of that household has been falling. This puts a lot of things into context. So I would argue that there is no ideological shift to the right at the moment. It looks like that, but actually people are not changing their political conception of the world, they are facing a harsh economic reality. Because if your real income is falling, whether you are a liberal or a conservative, you have to cut your expenditures.

Now, if your real income is falling, it would be very surprising to me if you did not want to cut those expenditures called taxes, or those expenditures called social welfare spending. That is money going to somebody else, and one way to recoup your income is to take back what you have been giving to other people through the government. I would start out by arguing that what we are seeing at the moment is rational economic budgeting, rather than an ideological shift.

ALVIN KIBEL: Why don't the people in this household get hot about military spending?

DANIEL BELL: That has not gone up yet.

LESTER THUROW: Yes, as of 1979, it had not gone up. We are just putting it up in 1981.

In the context of our economic situation, Ronald Reagan's victory is not a surprise. He had two great advantages over Jimmy

---

This is a taped talk and discussion at the *Partisan Review* office in February, 1981.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carter: first, he had not delivered the bad news for two years; second, he had an answer for the $18,000 household—get the government out and make it smaller. Now it does not make any difference for the moment whether you think that will or will not work; it was a plausible answer to the average American citizen. Jimmy Carter did not have any answer at all for that $18,000 family.

I think the liberal Democrats had the same problem. In 1936 Roosevelt brought in two fundamental domestic policy changes: the first was Keynesian economics, which promised to guarantee prosperity for the middle class—jobs, employment, rising real standards of living. But by 1980, it became clear that the economics of the 1930s was not going to solve the problems of the 1980s. Therefore, the traditional techniques the Democrats had used to guarantee a rising real standard of living for the average household no longer worked, and that part of the Roosevelt platform collapsed. The other part of the Roosevelt platform was social welfare. But social welfare spending is not viable in a period when the income of the middle class is falling. Middle-class Americans are altruistic but not willing to sacrifice. As long as their income is going up, they are willing to allocate a share of it to helping other people. But they are not willing to *lower* their income to help other people.

Thinking about President Reagan, you have to ask yourself two questions. First: why did the income of the middle class start to fall in 1979? Second: can President Reagan reverse the trend? I would be willing to argue that if he cannot reverse it, and he has to deliver a falling standard of living for four years, then there will be a lot of reborn Democrats by 1984, and we will be talking about a swing to the left. The American middle-class family is not going to like a falling standard of living under Reagan any better than they liked it under Carter. So the fundamental political dilemma that the Reagan administration faces—and this is a big part of the argument between the new right and the old right—is how to deliver a rising standard of living to that average household, so that it will again vote for Reagan.

There are three causes for the drop in real income, starting in 1979. First, the rate of growth or productivity has been falling since approximately 1965, but it did not turn negative until early 1979. At the end of 1980, the average American worker is only 96.5 percent as efficient as he was in 1978, and if efficiency goes down 3.5 percent, then there is 3.5 percent less to be divided among Americans and the average standard of living has to fall because productivity is falling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nobody can make the standard of living go up as long as productivity is falling.

Productivity is also falling because at the beginning of 1979 OPEC took 2 percent of the American Gross National Product (GNP) and at the end of 1980 they were taking 5 percent. That is 3 percent less for Americans to get.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: I don't understand how the rising price of oil lowers productivity.

LESTER THUROW: It does not lower productivity, but you have to give more of your goods to buy oil—it's a separate drain. The rising price may also lower productivity; we will come back and talk about that.

BERNARD AVISHAI: How much of OPEC's money gets reinvested in the American economy?

LESTER THUROW: A little, but not all that much. It is recirculated elsewhere. And it does not make any difference whether it is reinvested in the American economy. Part of your income has still been taken away from you.

The third thing that caused the standard of living to go down was the recession we had in 1980 in order to fight inflation: it knocked about 2 percent off the GNP. Again, this leaves 2 percent less to be divided among the population.

There are also technical reasons why productivity is falling. I cannot give you a full-fledged, blow-by-blow account of every aspect of the problem, but here are some of the things economists are looking at. I sometimes argue that it is basically death by a thousand cuts, because no one big thing has caused productivity to go down; there are lots of little things.

One problem has to do with the tremendous variation of productivity from industry to industry. So when the economy is moving out of low productivity industries into high productivity industries, you gain in productivity and vice versa. In America, from 1948 to 1965, productivity grew a little over 3 percent per year; from 1965 to 1972, a little over 2 percent per year; from 1972 to 1978, a little over 1 percent per year, and since then it has been negative. Back in 1948, agricultural productivity was only about 40 percent of the national average. So when you took a worker out of agriculture and put him into industry, you made a 60 percent gain in productivity. People tend to forget that we still had a large proportion of the population in agriculture in 1948, that we moved 9.2 billion man-hours from agriculture into industry between 1948 and 1965. But by 1972, agriculture was no longer shrinking. The rate of agricultural

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

productivity rose, and there was no longer a tremendous gap between agricultural and industrial productivity. That fact by itself explains about 17 percent of the decline in national productivity.

Another problem industry is construction. There, productivity is down by about 30 percent, explaining another 17 percent of the national decline. Construction productivity is very hard to define. The government uses three indices to figure out the rate of inflation in construction: The American Telephone Company index, the Turner Construction Company index, and the index of the Bureau of Public Roads. To argue that these government indices are wrong (as some people do) is to say that these big buyers and producers of construction do not have a clue what it costs them to build and buy things. People are a little reluctant to say that. On the other hand, there are some funny things going on in construction. Real output, after correcting for inflation, from the mid-fifties to the mid-seventies has supposedly gone up about 60 percent, but the use of construction materials—steel, concrete, and so on— has gone up 170 percent. Can we believe every building built in 1980 takes two and one half times as much steel as every building built back in 1955? That is a bit of a mystery. Some of it may have to do with electrical power because in the seventies we became involved in disputes over nuclear power, and when we have a dispute, such as the one at Seabrook, it shows up as a decline in construction productivity—workers are on the job, but not working. Some people think it has to do with roads because in the fifties and sixties we were building interstate highways across Kansas, as a highly efficient, mechanized operation, while in the seventies we were bogged down with projects like the Westside Highway in New York. All of these factors may have contributed to the basic problem.

The area of electric and gas utilities is as clear as construction is murky. Back in the fifties and sixties, utilities had positive productivity gains of 8 or 9 percent per year. They now have losses. These utilities explain about 8 percent of the national decline in productivity. The reason is simple: the manpower in the electric utilities has shifted to the distribution network. As long as every household is taking more kilowatts of electricity, productivity increases. But as soon as households cut back on their use of electricity, output per kilowatts consumed goes down, although you still need the same number of people to maintain the lines. So productivity becomes negative. In this industry, negative productivity is the national policy, in order to lower the consumption of energy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Productivity is also down 20 percent in mining. The reason for this is also clear. People tend to forget that the largest mining activity in the United States is drilling oil wells. Because we calculate oil well drilling productivity by the number of barrels of oil brought up from the ground, 80 percent of the decline in mining productivity has been caused by geological depletion. The other 20 percent is caused by federal regulations (environmental, safety, and so on). It takes time and money to fill up an empty open pit mine, or to put more timbers in an underground mine to keep people from getting killed.

Productivity is also declining in "services." In common parlance, people talk about services as if they were everything except construction, mining, agriculture, and manufacturing. The government uses a narrow definition for services. But even a narrow definition of services absorbs a tremendous fraction of the manpower added to the private economy. Actually about a third of the manpower in the 1970s went into services. The history of services is the opposite of that of agriculture. In 1948, agricultural productivity was 40 percent of the national average. At that time service productivity was 96 percent of the national average. It has been declining, so that it is now down to 62 percent of the national average. When you move a worker from industry to service, you place a 38 percent drag on productivity, because you are lowering his productivity. That is what we did in the 1970s.

Almost half of the workers who moved into the service sector went into health care; and almost all of those health care workers went into nursing homes. Productivity there is down because bathing, feeding, and putting grandmother to bed is a low productivity operation. Now, you can regard taking care of grandmother as a good thing, even if it is a negative blow to productivity. But of course someone has to pay for taking care of her. If you do it in your own home, it is not a net drag on your cash income. But if you do it in a private nursing home, it is a drag on your net income. GNP is basically just cash incomes, so when you move from a nonmonetized activity (taking care of grandmother at home), to a monetized activity (putting her in a nursing home), it may be a net improvement in your welfare, but it's a net reduction in your income.

Another third of the people in services went into business consulting: they became lawyers and accountants, and so on. According to the way the government keeps statistics, these people are in low productivity employments. That makes some sense. An account-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ant or a lawyer added to the payroll of a firm doesn't directly add anything that is measured as output. The only way he can improve output is if in some sense he speeds up the decision-making process so that the other people can increase their output. But if I fall on your sidewalk and sue you and we each hire a lawyer, that's pure negative productivity—we have added hours of work, but not output, because all I can do is take from you something you already have.

Another substantial part of the service industry contributing to the overall decline of productivity is the increased number of private police and security guards. A private security guard is pure negative productivity because if you add a guard outside your door, you are adding nothing to output, you're just guarding old output.

EUGENE GOODHEART: Was service ever a positive production industry?

LESTER THUROW: It can be.

EUGENE GOODHEART: Can you give us an example?

LESTER THUROW: Two years ago, I had a serious accident and severed an Achilles' tendon. A doctor put me back together again, so that's positive productivity: I now have a leg that works.

EUGENE GOODHEART: You count as an instance of positive productivity putting your leg together. But you cited taking care of old people as negative productivity.

LESTER THUROW: No, it's positive productivity, but it's lower than the industrial average. It takes more hours of work to produce positive output taking care of grandmother than it does to produce the same amount of output building computers. So the productivity is much lower.

BERNARD AVISHAI: When you use the term "output," do you mean additions to inventory?

LESTER THUROW: No.

BERNARD AVISHAI: You're talking about additions to commodities that get sold.

LESTER THUROW: Yes. The way we measure output in terms of productivity is that we take some base year (which is now 1972) and we look at the price of a given product in that base year. Then we go to 1980 and ask how many units were sold in that year. And we value each unit at the 1972 price and look at what has happened to the increase in output between 1972 and 1980.

BERNARD AVISHAI: If 200,000 automobiles are made but not sold, does productivity in that industry decrease?

LESTER THUROW: No, that is still output. Goods and services produced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but added to inventory still count as output. A product does not actually have to be sold, it just has to be for sale to be considered output. All we are interested in, in this context, is how many hours of work it takes to make a car.

BERNARD AVISHAI: You don't care how many hours of work it takes to make the *value* of the car.

LESTER THUROW: No, just the hours it takes to make the car. The only reason we need money at all in this enterprise is that we have to compare cars with refrigerators.

Let's talk about investment, because that is what the Reagan administration is all about in some sense. This represents only about 20 percent of the problem, but it is important to understand what the problem in investment is. In the 1950s and 1960s, when productivity was growing at 3 percent per year, we were investing about 9.5 percent of the GNP in plant equipment. In the 1970s, as productivity became negative, we began investing 10.5 percent of the GNP. Investment goes up at precisely the same time that productivity goes down. There's a simple answer to this problem. In the United States, the average American worker uses $50,000 worth of plant equipment. So for the average American worker to be productive, you need $50,000 worth of equipment with which to work. This means that if you have a baby during a baby boom, you are making the implicit promise that approximately twenty-two years later you will stop and save $50,000 to equip your baby to go into the labor market. That's precisely the promise we are not living up to. If we were living up to this promise, we would be cutting our consumption, saving, and investing to equip the baby boom (and the female entrant boom) workers with all they need to become average American workers. We are not doing that. The amount of capital per worker is falling, and therefore the amount of productivity is falling: every year the average American worker has less equipment to work with. The response of neoclassical economics to a baby boom would be to lower the relative wage rate to make labor become relatively cheap compared to capital. But our government believes in market intervention, so we have to prevent the market from correcting itself.

Let's look at the price of capital in relation to the price of labor. Here there have been some dramatic changes. We can look at it in three different ways. First, we can look at the *full price* of labor, at "the compensation of labor" for an hour of work—not just a wage rate, but health benefits, pension benefits, and so on. From 1948 to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1965, when we had a positive rate of productivity, the price of labor relative to the price of capital was going up at 2.7 percent per year, which meant that every year labor was becoming more expensive relative to capital, or capital was becoming cheaper relative to labor. Since 1972, the rate of purchase prices has been down to plus 0.7. So the rate at which labor is becoming expensive relative to capital has slowed down dramatically.

The second thing we have to add is the cost of energy, because it takes energy to run capital. When you consider both the purchase price and the operating price of capital, you get a shift from plus 2.9, at which labor has become expensive relative to capital, down to minus 2.9, at which capital is becoming expensive relative to labor. That's what it means when we say we are getting less capital per worker. An intrinsic part of that is falling productivity. The economy is doing exactly what it ought to be doing during this kind of period—productivity ought to be falling. On the other hand, you can argue that you cannot afford it. We cannot afford it domestically—our form of government will not abide a falling standard of living for ten years. And we cannot afford it in terms of international politics. We are now tenth in the world in terms of industrial output. Are our alliances viable when the United States is noticeably poorer than its allies? The Japanese productivity rate is growing at 7.5 percent per year, German productivity at 4.25 percent per year, and ours is falling at 1 percent per year.

ROBERT NOZICK: Did those countries have baby booms?

LESTER THUROW: They did not have baby booms. And they did not have the rapid increase of female workers that we have had.

Let's talk about what can be done about the drop of productivity. You can try to stimulate investment, to cure that 20 percent of the problem. Or you can even overstimulate investment, because although investment causes only 20 percent of the problem, you can cure more than 20 percent of the problem. And that's one of the things the Reagan administration plans to do with Kemp-Roth.

This brings us to supply-side economics. Let's look at this in terms of savings and investment. The average American family regularly saves 5 percent of its income. And there is not a scintilla of evidence which would suggest that if you give the American family an across the board tax cut they would save more than 5 percent. We have had several across the board tax cuts since World War II, and we have never had an increase of savings after such a cut. Americans don't save as much as people in other countries do. While the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American savings rate is 5 percent, the German rate is 14 percent, and the Japanese rate is 20 percent.

RODOLFO CARDONA: Isn't that because in Japan and Germany credit is much harder to get?

LESTER THUROW: That's one reason. In both Europe and Japan consumer credit is much harder to get. In Japan you have to pay cash for a car. That has two consequences: the money you would have borrowed if you could have can be used for factories; and your savings can be used for plant equipment until you get enough to buy your car.

One way Europeans get the savings rate up is through a value added tax (VAT). This is a tax on consumption, which means you don't pay if you don't consume. A large tax on consumption is a powerful incentive not to consume. If President Reagan were seriously interested in supply-side economics, he might take taxes off investment and work effort and load them onto consumption. A 10 percent VAT would rather quickly eliminate the corporate income tax, and completely eliminate the social security tax. The first is a tax that is basically on investment, the second is a tax on work effort. Corporate income tax cuts would go to high income groups, the social security tax cut would go to low income groups. But in this country most groups that pay taxes would insist on spending their tax break, as opposed to saving it.

By contrast, the Japanese have strong incentives to save. For instance, they do not have private pensions. On a Japanese worker's day of retirement, he is given eight years' worth of income. Most private pension funds in the United States are not funded. And so we don't even save for our old age when we contribute to our pension fund, because that money is just given to a current retiree, and the assumption is that somebody who is working in the company when we retire will give the money to us. Under the Japanese system, the company has to fully fund the pension system. And the worker has to save it if he wants something for his old age.

The Japanese also take one third of a worker's income and give it to him every six months as a bonus. If you have a low monthly wage and a big bonus that comes every six months, you'll save that bonus. There's also no question that when you do not have a social pension, you are encouraged to save for your old age.

DANIEL BELL: Would you want a VAT that is progressive against proportional incomes?

LESTER THUROW: You can make a VAT as progressive as you like, with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an income tax credit. For instance, if you had a $1000 income tax credit, a $10,000 family that paid $1000 in VAT would get it back in its income tax. A $20,000 family that paid $2000 worth of VAT would get $1000 back. You can make VATs as progressive or as regressive as you like. But none of the things I've just described would be regarded as politically popular.

BERNARD AVISHAI: Why would these things be unpopular?

LESTER THUROW: If I came to you and said: "Look, I'm going to make a Japanese family out of you; you now consume 95 percent of your income, and I'm going to adopt various techniques to force that down to 80 percent," I would be reducing your standard of living quite dramatically for a period of time.

DANIEL BELL: We can have a deferred income—we did it during World War II.

LESTER THUROW: Oh, in a war environment you can. What you need to think of is a moral equivalent of war. Since it takes five to ten years to build major new facilities, then in some sense you're saying that American society faces the choice of deliberately cutting its standard of living now, in order to put the economy back on track five to ten years from now, or letting its standard of living fall more slowly in the 1980s—and it will continue to fall in the 1990s.

DANIEL BELL: The fascinating thing is that for the last fifteen years, the left has not talked of economic growth, it has talked of redistribution, whereas in the last five years the Republicans have talked of expansion, of growth, etc.

LESTER THUROW: I think that is only partially right. There is a tremendous difference within the Reagan administration between what I will call the "old right" and the "new right." The new right is dictating the current right strategy—the strategy of Kemp, Laffer, and Stockman—all the people who think we have to go for economic growth because we have to raise the income of the $18,000 household. The old right is arguing that this is not the highest priority. It argues that stopping inflation is the number one priority. I think we are going to see a tremendous dispute within the Reagan administration as to whether one goes the growth route or the anti-inflation route. I don't think it is clear which way they are going to go; so I think it is only half-true to say that the right advocates growth.

ROBERT NOZICK: At some point, people are going to start asking where we will be four years from now.

LESTER THUROW: Well, it depends on whether voters are going to vote on real income or on the inflation rate. The old right will tell Reagan that if he does what Laffer, Kemp, and Stockman want, he is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

going to have an even higher rate of inflation in 1984 than the one we have now. The new right will say that if you do what the old right wants to do, you may have a lower rate of inflation, but incomes will be falling and people will vote you out of office for that reason.

ROBERT NOZICK: On your diagnosis, if Reagan succeeds, he fails.

LESTER THUROW: In the long run, I think that's true, but not in the short run. Obviously, if President Reagan can restore economic growth, he's home free, at least for a while. On the other hand, I think you are absolutely right: if you have ten or fifteen years of economic growth, I'm sure people will begin pushing for social welfare programs again. When our real income is rising we can afford to be charitable.

ROBERT NOZICK: But with rising unemployment, social expenditures have been going up very rapidly.

LESTER THUROW: That's because of unemployment insurance.

ROBERT NOZICK: Reagan now wants to cut that unemployment insurance.

LESTER THUROW: Well, the new right can also make that argument to Reagan. They can say, "Look, if you follow the procedure of the old right, in addition to having falling incomes, the government budget will go through the roof, because you will have to allocate so much more money to unemployment insurance that it will more than overwhelm any cuts you make in the social programs." And that certainly happened to Mrs. Thatcher. Every dollar she cut out of the budget caused the unemployment bill to go up $1.10.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: You talked earlier about the falling rate of productivity. And then you seemed to shift to production, not productivity.

LESTER THUROW: I may have been a bit sloppy. Rate of productivity and production are basically the same thing. The GNP and productivity are not the same thing, because when you increase productivity, you could choose to take your increased income in terms of leisure, which would mean the GNP would not go up. That's why economists tend to want to talk about productivity. To economists, economic growth means productivity. But in the general language, economic growth refers to GNP.

DANIEL BELL: This is a side point, but do you have any estimate of how strong the so-called underground economy is?

LESTER THUROW: The underground economy is virtually impossible to measure. If an activity is illegal, by definition people are not cooperating in measuring it. Everybody agrees that the underground economies are much bigger in Europe than they are in the United States. The question in the United States is whether the underground

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

economy here is any bigger than it ever has been. The underground economy includes all kinds of things that we do not usually think of as illegal. High school babysitting is the largest underground activity in America. It's uncertain whether genuinely illegal underground activities—such as drug traffic—are any greater than before. What we don't have, unlike Italy, are actual illegal manufacturing plants.

DANIEL BELL: The Laffer argument is that if you lower the tax rates, you'll bring that money back into the economy.

LESTER THUROW: There is no evidence of that. If you can get by with paying zero taxes, and somebody lowers the tax from fifty to forty, why should you rush off to pay forty?

DANIEL BELL: The money has to be laundered sometime.

LESTER THUROW: That's one of the reasons the Europeans have a big VAT. A VAT is a way to tax the underground economy.

ROBERT NOZICK: What if criminals buy stolen cars?

LESTER THUROW: Somebody paid the VAT when the car was new.

Let's turn to American business practices. When Ronald Reagan says the government is not going to solve our economic problems, he's absolutely right. And that includes government changes in the tax laws. A critique that argues that something is wrong with American business management is gaining momentum, but that has nothing to do with government whatsoever. The Japanese are the most vociferous advocates of this line of reasoning.

About a year ago, *Fortune* magazine held a meeting, at which a group of American businessmen and a group of Japanese businessmen who run American subsidiaries were each asked to explain what they thought was wrong with the American economy. The American businessmen spent the whole time complaining about the government. The Japanese businessmen said, "We don't think that's your problem at all. We think you guys are lousy managers." By that they meant two things: that American managers fail to inculcate a sense of teamwork in their workers, and that American middle and upper management is inefficiently structured.

The Japanese are able to inculcate in their workers a strong sense of the virtues of teamwork, of corporate identity, of the need for individual workers to help speed up productivity for the good of all. And the Japanese have a very strong case that they can do the same thing in the United States. The Sony plant in San Diego set the worldwide productivity record last year. Now why can the Japanese run a successful consumer electronics plant in the United States,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with American workers, but American management cannot? The Japanese have had thirty years of 7.5 percent annual gains of productivity. We have never had one such year in our entire history. We would have a productivity problem vis-a-vis the Japanese even if our rate had not gone down.

Think about a Japanese worker and an American worker, faced with a new labor-saving machine. The Japanese worker comes armed with a lifetime job, a wage rate that attaches to him as a person, and no matter what he does, he'll make exactly the same amount of money, and a bonus, based on productivity and profits. A new machine cannot hurt that worker. All it can do is raise his bonus. Think of an American worker facing the same machine. He may become unemployed, his job skills may become obsolete, he has every rational reason to resist that technical change. Think about the thing that the Japanese are famous for: individual workers doing small things to raise the rate of productivity. For most workers the only place to raise productivity is on their own job. If an American worker thought of a way to make his own job more productive, he would cause people to be laid off. In addition, his coworkers would be afraid of him because they don't want him generating another good idea causing *them* to be laid off.

DANIEL BELL: I think you are presenting too rosy a picture of the Japanese. The Japanese also have a large contracting out system. And those workers are really sweated and squeezed.

LESTER THUROW: Oh, absolutely. But the fact is that the Japanese have a primary work force that's desperately interested in productivity. No American work force is interested in productivity. And if a Japanese company gets into real trouble, all the women quit "voluntarily." So, they have groups they push—no question about that—but they have a large group in the society interested in pushing up productivity, because they have a set of microincentives congruent with their social goals. In the United States we have a set of microincentives that are antithetical to the social goals.

ROBERT NOZICK: There could be incentives within a company—it would not be hard for companies to offer workers incentives.

LESTER THUROW: That's what the Japanese do in their San Diego plant.

ALVIN KIBEL: They can't give them a lifetime job.

LESTER THUROW: Yes, they do.

The other Japanese critique of American business management is that American management has let its time horizons get too short. At the *Fortune* meeting, the Japanese said, "Look, you guys have a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

three to five year time horizon. With a fifteen year horizon, we can build a plant, build a service network, improve the quality of our products, and eventually run a five year horizon firm out of business." The problem is the incentive structure we have built for American management. We have investors who invest on a daily if not an hourly basis, so that companies must always be looking over their shoulders at the stock market; we have top management that gets a bonus based on current profits (European and Japanese managers do not get bonuses based on current profits); and we have middle-level managers who are set up as profit centers—they are promoted or demoted based on current profits. With that kind of management incentive, why should anybody have a long run time horizon?

At the *Fortune* meeting, the Japanese pointed out that Nissan's Datsun was on the American market for ten years before it ever started making money. And they asked the American businessmen what American firm would be willing to do the same thing. The answer is none.

The other day I was at the General Electric management institute and I asked thirty division managers to tell me their division time horizons. The mathematical average was 2.8 years. How do you build new factories if your time horizon is 2.8 years? You do not. That's one of the interesting things about investment in the 1970s. Although we're investing more, we have almost completely stopped building new industrial facilities. It may partly be due to the problem of time horizons. You cannot blame it all on inflation, because foreigners have inflation problems too.

ROBERT NOZICK: Is there some reason for thinking American time horizons are shorter than they used to be?

LESTER THUROW: Yes, there are a lot of reasons. This whole business of turning middle management into profit centers happened during the last ten years. We've always had bonuses, but they have gotten bigger relative to salaries.

EUGENE GOODHEART: Does American management acknowledge the justice of these criticisms?

LESTER THUROW: To a certain extent, yes. But Americans argue that they are more averse to risk partly because of their short time horizons. Do you know the story about video recorders, all of which are made in Japan? The famous Betamax. The patents on the Betamax aren't owned by the Sony Corporation. Ampex, the American tape manufacturer owns the patents on the Betamax. When they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

invented the video tape recorder, they were not a big enough corporation to take the initial losses involved in introducing the product. They went around to all the major American corporations, were turned down everywhere, and Sony picked it up. We seem to be getting into the British situation, where we do a lot of the good inventing, and then are not successful in bringing our inventions into the market.

ROBERT NOZICK: Why don't the large investors who are interested in long term yields act as a corrective to this problem?

LESTER THUROW: My answer to that is one of the reasons I have advocated eliminating antitrust laws. In other countries business can turn to the banks for long term investments. German business is assured of long run stability by its banks. When a bank gives a company a big loan, a member of the bank gets a seat on that company's board of directors. The bank becomes part of the company's management and follows its money. That kind of close linkage between a financial institution and an industry is illegal in the United States. You could put a banker on your board of directors, but it would have to be a banker who is not loaning you money.

Another problem with American business is disinvestment—the process of getting out of dying industries. If I were to rate countries on a continuum, I would rate the Japanese as the best at getting out of dying industries, we're in the middle; the Europeans are the worst. The Japanese are very good at getting out of dying industries. The government and the companies get together and negotiate a closedown. Of course that would be illegal here, under our antitrust laws. Two years ago, when we were adopting trigger pricing, to keep our most obsolete steel mills open, the Japanese negotiated a 10 percent closedown of their steel industry. They closed a mill newer than the newest mill in Great Britain. We use government to protect dying industry, they use government to force dying industry out of business. They got in *and* out of textiles before we got out.

And the Japanese are surpassing us in starting new industries, too. Everybody would agree that semiconductors are a leading industry in the United States. That industry is now shifting from a low capital intensity technology to a high capital intensity technology. The traditional American way to do that is to borrow twenty to thirty percent of the money, and finance the rest out of retained earnings. That way, you make a slow shift from one technology to another. The Japanese have announced one of their famous better ideas: they're going to lend that industry ten billion dollars before it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever makes a nickle, build the capital intensive factories first—and when that occurs they will drive the rest of the world out of business. That's precisely what they did in automobiles; it is precisely what they did in steel; and it's precisely what they're planning to do in semiconductors. Now, what is the American answer? You can't say, "Let the market work," because the Japanese will run you out of the market. And you can't say, "Keep the Japanese out of the American market" (which you could of course do), because then they will conquer the rest of the world, and what are you exporting? I would argue that the Japanese are going to force us towards some sort of national coordination. They forced steel out of business, but that wasn't a tremendous tragedy, since steel is a dying industry. But when they start forcing your growing, leading industry out of business, that's an absolute disaster.

EUGENE GOODHEART: By national coordination, you mean heavy government intervention.

LESTER THUROW: It would not be fair to say that the Japanese government was intervening in the sense of doing things that Japanese industry didn't want done. They are simply supporting industry, partly because of that 20 percent savings rate which goes into government banks, which in turn invest in the country as a whole. So they have high growth opportunities. And they are moving into those areas faster than the private market would move into them.

EUGENE GOODHEART: What are the bad consequences of the Japanese economic system?

LESTER THUROW: It is not anything women would find attractive—they play a very secondary role in the Japanese labor force. Dan Bell is right, too—there is a group of union workers who get the benefits I have described and a group of contractual workers and small businessmen who do not get those kinds of benefits. Also a lifetime job gives you the security to produce more, but you cannot quit because nobody else would hire you. There is no such thing as moving from Harvard to Yale. You can't increase your income either.

ROBERT NOZICK: So the incentives that you were talking about for increases in productivity are just spread evenly among the work force.

LESTER THUROW: Well, they do it on a teamwork basis; it may not be the whole plant, but it is never given to an individual.

EUGENE GOODHEART: It seems to me that you've said why we couldn't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possibly imitate the Japanese in this respect—the cultural differences are too great.

LESTER THUROW: I never said that we should imitate the Japanese. I am saying that they are going to put a tremendous pressure on us to do things differently—not exactly the way they do them, but as well as they do them.

ROBERT NOZICK: How did the Japanese select their workers at the San Diego plant? Did they take over an existing plant?

LESTER THUROW: No, the San Diego plant was new. But the Japanese have had phenomenal success in taking over existing Motorola plants. They took over Motorola in Chicago, where it was dying, going bankrupt, and, using exactly the same workers, they turned the whole thing around within a year.

American companies are now trying to learn from the Japanese style of management. It is a process of pushing the decision-making farther down in the enterprise; instead of having your boss decide what to do, you decide. In an engine assembly line in a Japanese automobile factory, each worker orders his parts for the next day. That makes the worker responsible for predicting how many engines he is going to build the next day. So inventory control, instead of being a management function, has become a worker function. If you order the parts for three engines then you are under tremendous pressure to assemble three engines.

The Japanese are making their system work in America. Let me give you an example of one thing they do at Sony in San Diego. You know that when you buy a piece of consumer electronics, it usually has a tag which says it has been inspected by "5101" or something like that. Instead of having this little tag, they put a little card with a picture of the inspector and his or her name. On the back of the card it says, "I've just inspected this product for you and I'm sure it's going to work, but if it doesn't, put this card in the mail." You just know that if your name and your picture are on a product you are going to do a slightly better job of inspecting it.

The Japanese also excel educationally. The other day, the New York Telephone Company said it had to interview fifteen people to find one person literate enough to be a telephone operator in New York City. Japanese schoolchildren outperform American schoolchildren in mathematics at every grade level. College entrants' test scores have been falling for fifteen years in the United States. We need to bring our educational standards up to theirs.

American business is also bogged down by our legal system. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the area of environmental legislation, the difference between ourselves and our foreign competitors is not the air quality standards. The Japanese have higher air quality standards for steel mills than we do. But we get bogged down in an eight-year legal hassle over what the standards are, and we can't make quick decisions. Both the Japanese and the Germans, under higher environmental standards, have found ways to make quick, certain decisions. Business can live with any air quality standard as long as it knows precisely what the standard is and that nobody is going to change the rule while the factory is half-built.

DANIEL BELL: These legal complexities have not emerged because the government *wants* to drag business into the courts.

LESTER THUROW: But the laws are such that is is easy to drag people into court. That's one area about which the Reagan administration is absolutely wrong. They think that they can change the environmental structure. They may put in an administrator who doesn't enforce the law, but all that means is that a judge will ruin every project because the Sierra Club will bring every project to court. There are a million ways to drag people into court if you want to stop progress.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: You've drawn a pretty bleak picture.

LESTER THUROW: You haven't heard the worst yet. Compare us with the British, because I think we are on the same road as they. About 1900, the American per capita GNP passed that of Great Britain. By 1980 their per capita income was less than half that in the United States, and last year the per capita GNP of *East* Germany surpassed that of Great Britain. The Germans can make communism work better than the British can make capitalism work. The problem obviously was that while the British did all kinds of great things year-by-year to stave off the decline, they never had to face one crisis that would overcome all the vested interests. I think that's a problem that's before us too: how to confront economic problems in an environment where there's no crisis.

EUGENE GOODHEART: You make it sound as though it's impossible to get a handle on the difficulty because it's so pervasive.

LESTER THUROW: There is no magic button that you can punch that's going to solve the problem. I firmly believe that.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ronald Hayman

KAFKA AND THE MICE

Starting work on a new biography of Kafka, I could have little idea of how much new material I would find or of how much—if anything—I would eventually be able to contribute towards a new interpretation of his work. But I knew that Max Brod's interpretation, which is misleading, influenced his biography, which is inadequate, and influenced Edwin and Willa Muir in their translation, which has colored the image of Kafka that obtains in the English-speaking world. Ronald Gray has already shown that *The Trial* is more like a modern *Pilgrim's Progress* than *Der Prozess*, while *The Castle* is more metaphysical than *Das Schloss*.

Reading through his published work in roughly chronological order, I soon saw that there could be no question of separating fiction from introspection. For Kafka, storytelling was one way—not easy, but less difficult than others—of talking to himself about himself. He wrote fragments of narrative into his diary, and it would be impossible to separate external events from fictional elaborations of them, or dreams and fantasies from stories. The confusion is a prerequisite of the lucidity he achieves. Inside the maze he chalks wonderfully clear lines on the ground, but only by dint of keeping his eyes off the walls. It would be pointless to inquire what they are made of.

The earliest surviving attempt to distill abjection into allegory occurs in a letter Kafka wrote when he was nineteen years old. (Because it was in a letter he could not destroy it, as he did other early fictions.) The alter ego is so ashamed of his height that he sits with his legs dangling outside the window. With clumsy, skinny, spidery fingers, he is knitting woollen socks, almost skewering his gray eyes on the needles. A well-dressed visitor jabs him, as he speaks, in the stomach, but when he is left alone he weeps, perhaps from self-pity, wiping his eyes with the socks that he is knitting.

Kafka's letters contain (at a rough guess) fifty times as many words as the fiction published with his consent, and they constitute the only part of his *oeuvre* that does not pose the problem: Whom was he writing for? After showing his work to Oskar Pollak, who was his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

closest friend when he was twenty, he went on writing in secret for several years. He had met Brod in 1902 but did not show him any of his work or even admit that he was writing until about 1906, and Brod could not remember being allowed to read any of it until 1909.

Not that Kafka was writing entirely for himself in the stories or entirely for his correspondents in the letters. As with a forty-page letter to his father, which he never delivered, he compulsively sketched gestures of communication, only to leave them uncompleted. Perhaps he was writing to the people (and especially to the women) who looked at him with an indifference he found intolerable. It was too painfully reminiscent of the childhood in which his mother had had unlimited time for her husband but almost none for her son. There is a revealing passage in "Wedding Preparations in the Country" when the narrator, who is not a writer or involved in storytelling, reflects about how much easier it is to tell a story about oneself in the third person than in the first. The word "story" occurs to him when he sees a woman looking at him or perhaps just looking in his direction. If only he could explain everything to her. "But all the work one does gives one no right to expect loving treatment from everybody, on the contrary, one's alone, quite remote, and only an object of curiosity." The non sequitur is never brought into focus, but the fantasy behind it is that if only the woman could be made to listen, if only everything could be explained to her, nothing about him would strike her as odd or unlovable. Later the same fantasy and the same need would drive Kafka to write over a quarter of a million words of self-explanation to Felice Bauer. Physically she did not attract him, and most of the time he did not want her physical presence, but not having her love was almost unbearable.

Perhaps the question "Whom was he writing for?" is a secondary one. What mattered was to keep writing, even if what he wrote was never read again, even by himself. Writing was a means of protecting himself by splitting himself into two halves. One half can go out and take all the risks, while the other half stays safe and snug, hiding under the bedclothes. Raban—the name (raven) hints at his relation to Kafka (*kavka* means jackdaw)—can do what Kafka did as a child: "I can send my body with clothes on. If it totters out through the door of my room, the tottering betrays not fear but its nothingness. Nor is it excitement if it stumbles on the steps, travels sobbing into the country, and eats its evening meal there in tears. For I myself am all this time in bed, tucked up cosily under the yellow-brown blanket. . . . For I'm still dreaming." This is comparable to what, for the schizophrenic, can feel like a separation between self and body. The real self is held back so violently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that it comes to feel disembodied, while the body becomes the center of what D.W.Winnicott calls "the false self." The disembodied self is confined to purely mental activity, while the body can go out and confront other people, without jeopardizing the integrity of the real self. But for Kafka, the self that stays behind is the one in the greater danger, having no solid corporality to protect it from the magical transformations that imagination can induce. "I have, as I lie in bed, the form of a large beetle, a stag-beetle or a cock-chafer, I believe. . . . Then I'd pretend it was a matter of hibernating, and press my little legs to my paunchy body. And whisper a few words, instructions, to my sad body, which is close by me, and crooked. I've soon finished. It bows, goes hastily and it will do everything as well as can be, while I rest." This is from "Wedding Preparations," written seven years before *Metamorphosis*. He has split himself like an amoeba: the self to be asserted is detached from the self that abdicates.

That Kafka's father played a leading role in inducing this anxiety is cogently suggested by the forty-page letter written when Kafka was thirty-three years old. As evidence the letter is valid but incomplete, not because it leaves the father's view out of account—it does not—but because it ignores the anti-Semitism which tended to foster guilt feelings and played a part in habituating Kafka to siding against himself. In 1882, the year before he was born, a professor of theology at Prague University published an article maintaining that the Jews were committed by their religion to working for the destruction of all Christians and all their property. The slander was repeated in a book, August Rohling's *Der Talmudjude*, and in a spate of rabidly anti-Semitic leaflets, which coincided with the first in a series of damaging allegations that Jews were perpetrating ritual murder. In 1883 there was a trial in Tisz-Eszlar, a Hungarian village, where Jews were accused of slaughtering a Christian girl. Allegations of ritual murder followed at irregular intervals. One of the most damaging was made in 1899 when an unemployed Jew, Leopold Hilsner, was indicted for killing Anežka Hrůzová at Polná, in northeastern Bohemia. The idea that her blood had been used in Passover matzos was encouraged in pamphlets, newspaper articles, and speeches, especially after the post mortem reports that the body had lost large quantities of blood. In October mobs rampaged through the old city in Prague, overturning stalls and attacking shops, while similar incidents occurred in many Moravian towns. In Prague Jews were attacked on the streets, windows were broken in their shops and houses; when Kafka was nearly ten, a servant girl's body was found in the Elbe near Kolin, where his uncle

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philip lived, and rumor had it that her Jewish master and his friends had murdered her in order to use her blood in the matzos. Rioting ensued. As the grandson of a ritual slaughterer (*schochet*) Kafka must have been particularly sensitive to the anti-Jewish hysteria whipped up by the allegation; seventeen years later when he read Arnold Zweig's play *Ritualmord in Ungarn* (*Ritual Murder in Hungary*), he was reduced to tears. Based loosely on the Hilsner scandal, the play centers on a boy who falsely denounces his father and coreligionists. Finally he knifes himself in a synagogue. Kafka's vegetarianism may have had one of its roots in revulsion at the idea of his father's father's daily activity—ritually slitting the throats of animals, hacking up their bodies, feeding his family with money earned from butchering. The butcher's knife will be recurrent in Kafka's nightmares, daydreams, and fictions. "The regular diet of my imagination is fantasies like this one: I'm lying outstretched on the floor, sliced up like roast meat, and with my hand I am slowly pushing a slice towards a dog in the corner." He also started to write a story himself about ritual murder in Odessa but destroyed the manuscript. But anti-Semitic incidents are virtually never mentioned in Kafka's diaries or letters, even when he is attempting an exhaustive catalog of childhood events that caused psychological damage.

If he had the feeling that he was constantly "under surveillance," it must have been partly because of these, though mainly because his nagging father never desisted for long from his diatribe. Humiliatingly denounced, even in the presence of friends and strangers, Kafka retained the feeling he'd had as a child of being arbitrarily condemned and punished without having done anything wrong. This sense of being guilty and innocent at the same time was shared, to some extent, by other potential victims of anti-Semitism, caught as they were in the crossfire between pan-Germanism and Czech nationalism.

Like K. in *The Castle*, Kafka would never be able to graft himself into local society; nor could he seal himself off from it:

> The forsaken solitary who still wants now and then to attach himself somewhere, the man who, depending on the time of day, the changing state of the weather, of his business, and so on, may need to catch sight of a friendly arm, he could cling to—he can't hold out for long without a window looking out on the street. And if he feels no desire for anything at all, and only, as a weary man, leans on his window-sill with his gaze shifting between sky and passers-by, if he wants nothing and his head's slightly thrown back, even then the horses below will draw him down into their traffic of carts and noise, so ultimately into human concord. ("The Street Window")

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Windows and doors are abnormally important in Kafka's work because he could never feel proprietorial about space: it was always a matter of surveying alien territory or trespassing on it. He often daydreamed about leaving Prague, but until he was thirty-one years old he never managed (except for a few months in 1914 when there was no room for him) to move out of his parents' flat into a room of his own. His bedroom was like a corridor. His parents had to walk through it to get from the living room to their bedroom, and if his mother saw Kafka's jacket hanging up with a letter sticking out of the pocket, she was quite liable to fish it out and read it. She did that with one of Felice's letters, and then asked Felice to use her influence on Franz to make him eat more and sleep more.

I doubt whether anyone has been more sensitive to noise than Kafka was, and we will never quantify the agony he suffered from family shouting matches, laughter, doors slamming, taps running, household objects being dropped. There is the occasional pointer to this in the diaries, but except for one oblique remark—that he felt like vomiting when he saw the matrimonial bed, the bed linen no longer clean, the carefully laid out nightshirts—there is no pointer to the sound that must have been nearly unbearable. Hermann Kafka was not the sort of man who would feel obliged to respect his sensitive son's nervous system by inhibiting or even modifying the noises he wanted to make while coupling with his wife. We know the walls were thin enough for Kafka to hear if his father coughed in bed, so he must have heard a great deal besides coughing. Possibly that is one of the reasons he evolved the insane and exhausting routine of trying to sleep in the late afternoon after he had come home from the office and had something to eat. Then he tried to rouse himself into writing and go on until the small hours of the morning. Defying his congenital weakness, though only too aware of it, he was trying, in effect, to crowd two short days into every one. His routine was more comfortable and more productive when he found a room of his own in 1915, but as soon as he had the hemorrhage, just over two years later, he gave up trying to live on his own. For about eight months he stayed in the country with his sister Ottla, and after that lived with his parents again for five years. Apart from eight months in a mountain sanatorium and three more months with Ottla after she had married, he went on living in his father's flat until nine months before he died. So he could never feel that a house or a flat or even a room belonged to him. Throughout all the stints of freedom he had outside what he came to think of as a prison, it was always a matter of living as Ottla's guest or renting a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

restricted space in somebody else's property. He never even had a rented flat that was properly self-contained. This must have a lot to do with the way that Josef K. in *The Trial* knows himself to be under arrest though free to move from one place to another. And in *The Castle*, to stay in the village at all, K. has to be both devious and defiant. When he is given a job as caretaker in the school, he has to misuse space by sleeping in a classroom. When he tries to accost the castle official Klamm by waiting inside his sledge, he is like a frightened schoolboy steeling himself to go out of bounds. He can never feel "This space is mine. This is my territory." And neither could Kafka.

During office hours he was surrounded by non-Jews: it was exceptional for a Jew to be employed by the Workers' Accident Insurance Association. But from school days onwards, his friends, almost without exception, were Jewish. Even the sociable Brod had scarcely any non-Jewish friends. That Kafka was uneasy about this may be inferred from the critique he wrote in his diary (March, 1911) of Brod's novel *Jüdinnen* (*Jewesses*). Kafka complains about the absence of non-Jewish observers to put the Jewishness into perspective, and, unflatteringly, he compares the Jewish ladies with lizards. However happy we are to watch an individual lizard on an Italian footpath, we'd be horrified to see hundreds of them crawling over each other in a pickle jar. There was no non-Jewish observer to put his social life into perspective.

Though he lived in a Jewish world, Kafka began by feeling himself to be an outsider to the Jewish religion. Its rituals, he wrote in 1911, were "on their very last legs . . . have only a historical character." On his rare visits to synagogue, he felt alienated from the Eastern European Jews, who were less assimilated than their Western coreligionists in manners, habits, clothing, hair style and language. Most of the Easterners spoke Yiddish; the more orthodox still wore long sidelocks. Possibly Kafka's initial hostility to the work of Martin Buber was partly a hostility to Eastern Jews, for what Buber was doing in his books was presenting them to the West by translating into literature the oral tradition of Hassidic stories which merged religion, mysticism, and folklore. A turning point in Kafka's development as a writer and as a Jew was the arrival of the Yiddish actors in 1911. Their performances and his friendship with the leading actor, Yizchak Löwy, changed his attitude to the Yiddish language, to Jewish rituals, and to Hassidism. In 1912 he started reading books on Yiddish literature and Judaism, as well as attending events organized by the Bar Kochba society. By the time he met Buber in 1913, Kafka had already taken his first step—in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Metamorphosis—towards the kind of animal legend he was to write later, a kind which has affinities with the Hassidic tales Buber had translated. Their influence on Kafka's work was merging with that of the Yiddish theater. And in December 1914 he wrote the legend of the doorkeeper, which he incorporated into *The Trial*. Despite the cathedral setting, the matrix of the story is Judaic. There is no description of the building in which the gate (Tor) is situated; all we are told is: "Before the law stands a doorkeeper," and what he says about other doorkeepers implies that the building is as large as a castle or a palace. In the upper world, according to some Cabalistic parables, there are seven palaces, each guarded by hosts of gatekeepers, and God sits at the highest point, surrounded by awesome mystery.

What does Kafka mean by Law? In Judaism the Torah symbolizes cosmic law, and it is held in the Cabala to have pre-existed the creation of the world. The divine mysteries could be partially revealed through interpretation of the Torah, according to what Gershom Scholem calls the "unlimited mystical plasticity of the divine word," and in writing the parable of the doorkeeper Kafka found what he had been reaching for in the story about the penal colony—a narrative dramatization of paradox. Interpretation can be grafted into the narrative, as in the priest's conversation with Josef K., which Kafka wrote later, on December 13, but the story's meaning is like an elusive cluster of seaweed which can never be brought to the surface intact. The context associates the Law with the authority that is accusing K., but if he is guilty, the guilt seems to consist partly in his inability to find out what law he is alleged to have violated. Guilt feelings are fomented by uncertainty and this is how the proceedings (*Prozess*) develop into a verdict. (No *trial* takes place.) On one level the Law can be equated with the laws of Judaism: according to these Josef K., like K., is guilty of failing to procreate. ("Be fruitful and multiply" is a commandment.) The Law is also the cosmic law or the human condition which condemns all of us to death. No one is acquitted, and each of us has his own doorway to death, but the law against suicide forbids us to make our own choice about when to go through it. At the same time the parable can be interpreted in relation to the Cabalistic tradition that "the Torah turns a special face to every single Jew, meant only for him and apprehensible only by him," and that "a Jew therefore fulfills his true purpose only when he comes to see this face and is able to incorporate it into the tradition." Here Hassidism is at one with Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling* urges that the individual's relation to the Absolute must be personal and unique.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In 1915 Kafka did not go to synagogue on the Day of Atonement, but far from feeling indifferent to the Jewish Day of Judgment, he called his behavior "suicidal." In the summer of 1916 he was reading Genesis and excerpting it in his diary with interpolated notes such as: "God's rage against humanity." During his first days in Marienbad with Felice, he read nothing but the Bible, at least half-aware that he was learning from it about how to tell what struck him as the truth. "Only the Old Testament can see—say nothing about it yet." His diary entry for July 20 is a direct address to God: "Do not consign me to perdition. I know that what speaks here is a self-love, absurd, whether viewed from near or far, but I am alive for once, so have the self-love of the living."

At the beginning of 1917 Brod wrote to Buber that Kafka was drifting "unawares into Judaism." In the spring Kafka wrote "The Great Wall of China" in a style that sometimes parodies Talmudic commentary. Though the wall never becomes a mere symbol for the Law, Kafka was now tackling the problem of how it was evolved, and at the same time writing a miniature history of the Jews in the Diaspora.

One of Kafka's greatest enthusiasms in the last few years of his life was for the study of modern Hebrew, and his only symbiotic relationship with a woman was also a relationship with the traditions of Eastern European Judaism. Dora Dymant's father was an Orthodox Polish Jew and one of Kafka's earliest conversations with her culminated in her reading from Isaiah in Hebrew. Kafka's parents disapproved of her, looking down on her in the way most Western Jews looked down on Easterners, but with her help he found the courage to defy his father and live with her in Berlin. Meeting Brod in August 1923, shortly before he left Prague, he read out the curses from Leviticus and said that he wanted *tefillin*, the phylacteries used by Orthodox Jews for prayers every morning except the Sabbath. And during 1923 he borrowed his parents' Hebrew prayerbook.

The hemorrhage of 1917 had had a radical effect on his thinking, which had become more transcendentalist. It was a matter of having to believe—not merely in a God who had struck at him but in an Absolute and in a higher reality without any law of gravity or any mockery for things that to us seem ridiculous. Pulling against gravity is a "heavenly collar and chain" which choke us if we try to stay on earth, while the gravitational collar and chain choke us if we try to reach heaven. But only the spiritual is real.

Abstracting himself as far as he could from his diseased body, Kafka wanted to feel passive in the caress of his own phrases. At the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same time, both in thought and expression, he was repeating rhythms and symmetries found in the Bible and in Cabalistic writings, and he was influenced by Hassidic ideas about the value intrinsic to language.

His struggle for faith was a struggle to salvage his existence even if his body was beyond repair. "Believing means: releasing what's indestructible, in the self, or better: releasing the self, or better: being indestructible, or better: being." He was reading the periodical *Der Jude* (*The Jew*) and taking pleasure in its antimaterialism. One writer called the Bible sacramental and the world excremental. We are separated from God, wrote Kafka, on two sides: by the Fall and by the Tree of Life. Paradise remains intact and immune to the curse laid on mankind. This was why "Human judgment of human actions is true and futile—first true and then futile."

In Kafka's last three years (1921-1924) the imagery of ghosts and spirits became recurrent in his writing. He seemed to be unaware of how much sediment the Yiddish plays had left in his imagination, and while the Hassidic tales and the Cabala were invaluable to his fiction, they had also dragged him back into premodern premises. Writing about his illness, Kafka often used transcendental language, suggesting—at least half seriously—that scientific concepts made the malaise harder to cure than the idea of possession did. Was it not still an open question whether weakness caused evil spirits to invade the body or whether "weakness and illness are already a stage in possession, the preparation of the human body as a bed for unclean spirits to copulate in"? At the same time he was thinking of himself as being personally assaulted by God. In his diaries God is never mentioned by name, but on the 10th or 11th of February, 1922, he wrote, "New attack by G." A few sentences later, reversing the image, he equates God not with the enemy but with the general who is leading the despairing multitudes through mountain passes no one else can find in the snow.

The central joke in Kafka's much misunderstood story "Investigations of a Dog" is the satire on human presumption in expecting to arrive at a complete understanding of reality. The implication is that we are as blind to the presence of supernatural forces as the dog is to human intervention in canine affairs. It seems to him that food appears from above as a direct result of such activities as passing water on the earth to nourish it, scratching it, barking incantations. Whether willfully or voluntarily blind to humanity, he cannot see the laps underneath lap dogs—to him they appear to be hovering in the air—and he's mystified by the dogs who have been trained to perform in a circus.

Kafka's compulsion to leave so much work unfinished was partly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

superstitious: he wanted to stop short of activating its potential. "We can't escape the ghosts we release into the world," he told Gustav Janouch. "Again and again evil returns to its point of departure." The same anxiety, no doubt, lay behind his instructions to Brod that all his writing must be destroyed. Dora Dymant testifies: "Time and again he said to me, 'I wonder if I've escaped the ghosts'. . . . He wanted to burn everything he'd written in order to free his soul from these 'ghosts.' What he really wanted to write was to come afterwards, only after he had gained his 'liberty.' "

As Kafka says in one version—not finally used—of the opening to *The Castle*, "I've a difficult task in front of me, and I've dedicated my whole life to it. I do this gladly, without asking for pity from anyone. But because it's all I have—the task I mean—I ruthlessly reject anything that may distract me. I tell you, I can be mad in my ruthlessness." This may be too explicit, but a more decisive reason for suppressing it was that it points too revealingly at the correspondence between K.'s task and Kafka's. K.'s obsession about penetrating the castle reflects Kafka's relentless determination to go wherever his writing led him, to colonize as much as he could of the world inside his head, even if it meant defying the God who did not want him to write. His task involved him in besieging the forbidden castle, making contact with the Absolute, confronting the unconfrontable, looking God in the face and then doing his best to break the Second Commandment by constructing a graven image. He must defy all the doorkeepers.

In his last story "Josefine the Singer, or the Mouse People," the main focus is social. The narrator's primary interest is in the relationship between the prima donna and the people; one of Kafka's underlying concerns is with his own relationship with the Jewish people and Jewish culture. The mouse people is described as "nearly always on the move, scuttling to and fro for reasons that often aren't clear," and also as "not only childish but in some respects prematurely old, childhood and old age don't come to us as to others." Many of Kafka's Jewish contemporaries had also been deprived of a normal childhood and a normal maturity. But his links with the Jewish people were more negative than he would have liked; given respite from harassment, the mice dream "as if they could stretch and relax in the great warm bed of the community."

The mouse people had "always, somehow or other saved itself, though not without sacrifices which fill historical researchers with horror." (Who but Kafka could have compared Jews and mice so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tellingly that the parable looks prophetic?) Perhaps one reason for Kafka's earlier antipathy towards Buber's rendering of Hassidic legends was that they implied a folkish solidarity; what embarrassed him now was awareness of his indebtedness to them. The only oblique acknowledgment occurs in this story: Josefine denies any connection between her art and folk-squeaking, smiling with brazen arrogance when anyone points out the similarity. But the story raises the question of whether Kafka may sometimes have wished his fiction to serve the same function as folk art (or as Yiddish theater): when the mass mouse audience listens attentively to Josefine, the squeaking "comes almost like a message from the people to the individual." Josefine believes that she protects the people. If her art does not drive away the evil, at least it gives others the strength to bear it. Kafka could not seriously believe that his fiction would have this effect, but he could seriously play with the idea.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jane Coppock

A CONVERSATION WITH ARTHUR BERGER

Jane Coppock: Tell me something about your musical education.

Arthur Berger: I learned to read music and to play by ear. By about 1924 I was composing. I took books out of the library and set myself the task of writing a Mozart sonata, which came out sort of Schubert. By that time I had a Polish piano teacher. She would bring me pieces by Rachmaninoff, Paderewski, and Scharwenka. At the beginning when I had absolutely no technique, I murdered, I really murdered them, and she'd say, "marvelous!" and promptly give me another such piece. At Townsend Harris I pursued my musical interests by establishing a club called the Fine Arts Society. Townsend Harris was the first of the advanced high schools in New York, and it provided an excellent education. But there was no music that I can remember, no music at all. The club helped fill the gap. Through it, we would get tickets to the opera and concerts.

Coppock: Had you ever heard of Stravinsky or Hindemith?

Berger: No, no, not until I got to college. And not until I entered New York University in 1930 did I start hearing their music, although I recall Scriabin and Prokofieff as the "modern" composers more frequently played. I transferred to NYU after two years at City College, since by that time I had definitely decided I wanted to go into music and City had nothing to offer in this field. My father's reaction was the proverbial one: he was upset since he had determined I should be a lawyer.

Coppock: This was in 1930?

Berger: Yes. It was the Depression and since there was a likelihood I'd have to earn a living as a teacher—a high school teacher, since the prospects of a college job were utopian—I thought I had better get a degree in education. That's where things broke loose, because that is where I met Jerome Moross and Bernard Herrmann. We became the holy terrors with our avant-gardism. They had already found out about Charles Ives, Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, George Antheil,

---

From *Perspectives of New Music*, Fall-Winter issue, 1979.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Edgard Varèse. They took me to see most of these composers and the contacts bore some special fruits. For I was able to write about them, since to pay my tuition I had obtained a position doing music criticism for the *Daily Mirror*, a really scandalmongering Hearst tabloid. Why the paper wanted serious music criticism, I don't know, except that I had a cousin who had a job there, a distant cousin. . . .

Coppock: As a music reviewer?

Berger: As a book reviewer. He became interested in music and wanted to do music criticism himself, so he got me in to ghostwrite for him, and then he let me start using my name occasionally. I would go downtown to concerts at the New School where Henry Cowell was holding forth to ten or fifteen people. I would report such an occasion in the *Mirror*, and Ives, Cowell, Copland, Riegger, and Ruggles all started reading my reviews in it. When the old *World* died, its music critic got a job doing rewrite work on the *Mirror*, and he soon pointed out to the authorities, "Look at this fellow you've got here. Rubinstein, Horowitz, Hofmann play to sold-out houses at Carnegie Hall, and they also advertise, and he goes down to the New School to these affairs for ten or fifteen people." So I was soon fired. Few people had heard in those days of the composers Cowell presented. Once I was no longer on the *Mirror*, the only place you could read about them was in *Modern Music*, or in Paul Rosenfeld's book or his *New Republic* columns.

Coppock: And it was a regular crew of people at the New School?

Berger: Cowell, it was just Cowell. He would occasionally have visitors for a term (I recall the ethnomusicologist, Hornbostel), but mostly he would have people in to participate in his sessions by playing and discussing their music. He would have Copland, for example, and the young people Copland brought together under the rubric of the Young Composers Group.

Coppock: Didn't you belong to that?

Berger: I belonged to it, but you see I had stopped writing music right after NYU. But I became a member of the group anyway. I was supposed to fill the role of Jean Cocteau, or Paul Collaer—the person who would do the propagandizing for them. It was modelled after the French "Six," which had always had a critic, a pamphleteer associated with it. Copland would have us meet composers. After a concert we would go out to a restaurant like Child's with such people as Virgil Thomson, Antheil, or Varèse.

Coppock: Who was in the group?

Berger: Jerome Moross, Bernard Herrmann, Henry Brant, Elie Siegmeister, Lehman Engel, someone by the name of Irwin Heilner.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There was also Vivian Fine, whose music I admired so much that I copied it out to study and to play. And then there was Paul Bowles—he was the expatriate member of the group, then spending most of his time in France. Perhaps the most extraordinary music to come out of the group is Israel Citkowitz's cycle of five poems from Joyce's "Chamber Music." It is a tragedy of our time that Citkowitz stopped composing early in his career. He felt himself, as a neoclassicist, out of step with musical progress.

Coppock: Were the piano pieces you wrote at NYU played?

Berger: No, no I hid those. I didn't take them out until many years later, for the volume of twentieth century piano music edited by Joseph Prostakoff. Among the many reasons why I stopped composing, an important one was the particular orientation of the Young Composers Group. They were unsympathetic to the kind of "atonal" music I had been writing.

Coppock: Did you see Charles Ives in those days?

Berger: I was very much in touch with Ives, but I never went to see him. His wife took care of the correspondence, which was enough to give me the necessary data for the articles I started writing about him in the early thirties. But you have to understand that many of us were quite polemical in those days, both musically and politically. And I was warned it would be bad for his heart if he were engaged in talk that was too controversial.

Coppock: How did you know about him, just by word of mouth?

Berger: Well, the songs were being done at the New School and at Yaddo, and I guess even the League [of Composers] started doing things, and the [International Composers'] Guild . . .

Coppock: Were there any twentieth century pieces that had become standard repertory by then?

Berger: If any, they would more likely be by Scriabin or Prokofieff or Shostakovich or Sibelius or Vaughan Williams. Outside of the special efforts of conductors like Koussevitzky and Stokowski, and later Mitropoulos, new music was heard at the chamber concerts of the avant-garde groups. That's what made the League and the ISCM concerts such unique and distinguished events.

Coppock: Whose music was played at those concerts?

Berger: Well, Louis Gruenberg: he was a big name. So were Bernard Wagenaar and Werner Janssen. Middle of the road types, in the sense of romantic conservatives. Howard Hanson was successful. It was mostly music written in the tradition of the nineteenth century and also, of course, the products of neoclassicism, though these were considered austere and intellectual.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coppock: Did lots of people come to them? Were the audiences large?

Berger: Well, no, not large, but a cross-section from the literary, art, and dance worlds—what Thomson used to call "the interested audience."

Coppock: You were saying something about the reasons you stopped composing around 1933. Could we return to that?

Berger: I became confused. As I have said, I happened into this group where nobody could help me with the "atonal" or incipiently serial music in which I had become involved without understanding it too well or knowing much about its constraints.

Coppock: Were you the only one writing it?

Berger: As far as I knew, although Vivian Fine leaned in a somewhat chromatic direction, and through her I came into contact with Ruth Crawford's music. But the actual twelve-tone composers of approximately my generation—people like Perle, Babbitt, or Weber—had not yet come upon the scene.

Coppock: Did you know much twelve-tone music? Or any Weber at all?

Berger: I'm not sure we made a fine distinction between the earlier twentieth century Viennese music and the actual twelve-tone compositions. We heard the short Schoenberg piano pieces and the Berg sonata. And, as a matter of fact, the first Weber I heard was a choral piece at the ISCM in London before World War II, but it didn't make a profound impression on me. In any case, our group tended to be anti-Central European and pro-French. With Copland having spent time studying in France, the American thing as such was going to come out of the French and not the German.

Coppock: How did that American ideology develop?

Berger: Undoubtedly a number of factors contributed to it—as I suggest in my book on Copland. On the surface, it was noticeable that American music was receiving encouragement from the WPA, since artists were being supported and commissioned to carry out projects with Americana as their subject matter. You can easily understand that the mannerisms and devices coming out of Vienna were too remote for this purpose. We found them too highly imbued with the atmosphere of Central Europe, of gaslit attics in Vienna. It was only later, when the twelve-tone approach divested itself of local color, when it could be separated out as an international technique, that anyone concerned with national identity was to feel freer to adopt it.

Curiously enough, Americanism went hand in hand with political leftism, not the breast-beating Americanism, but the American liberalism that had spawned the WPA. Now it should be obvious that the demands of a proletarian music required greater accessibility

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than could be vouchsafed by the type of music emanating from Vienna. This was not so clear at first, and it was the subject of lively debate at the leftist arts groups—the Pierre Degeyter Club (specifically for musicians), the Rebel Arts Group, and the John Reed Club. Composers of all political complexions attended the meetings. Along with the Stalinists there were those of us who could not accept the restraint on personal freedom and leaned toward Trotsky. And it did not seem odd that there were also political conservatives, as long as they were musically avant-garde. For we naïvely assumed a certain similarity between the aims of political and artistic progressives. I remember how in 1933 things changed overnight. Cowell was telling us that the labor songs, the songs of oppression, must have the new dissonances in them because their subject was the future, the new freedom we would have. Then, of course, came the Moscow trials and the censure of Shostakovich. The music of the future, the workers' songs, would now have to be like Tchaikovsky, like traditional folk song. One had to bring the message of the new order to the people in a language they could comprehend, and this only added to the dilemma I was already in as a composer. So many possible choices! Tonality and Heinrich Schenker (I was only vaguely aware of Stravinsky's role in this area, though I must have had some inkling of the tendency through Copland's newest works); the atonality I had felt comfortable with; and, finally, the obligation to place one's music at the service of political change. It confused me terribly, because it seemed you had to decide which door to open and enter in order to be a composer. Simply wanting to satisfy a drive to write music, to live a life of music, was not enough. I needed time to think these issues through, to find out what music was or should be about.

Coppock: Is that why you went to Harvard?

Berger: Yes, in a way. In any case, *how* I went to Harvard had to do with the WPA. I used to be at the library a great deal—the music library on East 58th Street—and as a consequence I became quite friendly with Miss Lawton, the librarian. One day she told me, "You know, there's a project that they want done through the WPA of getting a booklet out on all the American music for the dance. Would you be interested?" Since I was in need of support, I naturally was interested. "But you know," she continued, "you have to be on relief before you can be hired by the WPA." I was living at home, and by that time my father had worked himself up from the South Bronx to an apartment hotel on West 72nd Street. But I couldn't apply for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

relief while living there, so I had to rent a furnished room in the West Seventies.

Coppock: This was in 1933?

Berger: Yes. While I was on relief, waiting for a specified length of time to pass in order to qualify for the WPA, Miss Lawton told me, "You know, something else has come up that might be more interesting to you. The Longy Music School in Cambridge wants to start a division called the Professional School, modelled after the Juilliard Graduate School, and they have a fellowship in music they'd like to give to start it out. Would you be interested in that?" I was, and I went up and had ear-training exams, and such. The person running the school was a cellist from the Boston Symphony named Yves Chardon. When it seemed I had qualified, I asked him what the terms of the fellowship were, and he informed me it paid my full tuition. I hadn't thought much about this aspect, and had assumed I'd be provided with my means of support. When I inquired into how I was expected to live, I was told he would help me "find something." So he gave me a letter to Moses Smith, music critic of the *Boston Evening Transcript.*

The *Boston Evening Transcript* was a great paper, though quite conservative, even more conservative than the two Republican papers I later worked for: the *New York Sun* and the *Herald Tribune.* T.S. Eliot wrote a poem about it that starts:

> "The readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript*
> Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn."

It was a paper with tiny print like the *Times* of London, and very sedate and unprepossessing, but businesslike in appearance. It was read by the best New England families. The *Transcript* was a marvelous paper to work for. I could be as serious and technical as I wanted to be without anyone objecting. Copy did not go to an editor or rewrite desk, but went directly to the composing room.

Coppock: What did you study at Longy?

Berger: Well, I had piano. I had Walter Piston for counterpoint and harmony. I was doing individual research with one of the faculty on Tudor choral music. And I had solfège, which I had to relearn, since I had had the movable *DO* and now had to use the fixed *DO*. The teacher would play a whole piece, a sonata allegro, and I would have to tell her afterwards all the keys it had touched. It was not just ordinary ear-training, and she would look as if she were ready to slap me on the wrist if I answered incorrectly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soon I decided, why not go to Harvard while I'm here? I had a little extra money from the *Transcript*, so I registered in a course with Hugo Leichtentritt, who had come straight from a milieu that enabled him to pass on to me the speculative notions of Hugo Riemann in theory and the contributions of Guido Adler to the new field of musicology. Since I was the only student in the Longy Professional School, I had to be prepared for every meeting with the faculty, and I presently decided that with Harvard and the newspaper work it was too much. So I asked Longy to reduce my load. It was pretty presumptuous after they had helped me obtain the *Transcript* job. As I look back, I'm not at all surprised that Chardon angrily declared, "No, all or nothing." At the time, however, I was indignant, and I abruptly left and was awarded a fellowship in musicology at Harvard for the following academic year.

Coppock: What made you decide to study with Nadia Boulanger?

Berger: In 1937 I received the Paine traveling fellowship from Harvard, and a tradition of going to study with Boulanger under it had already been established. Also, my closeness to Copland must have had something to do with it.

Coppock: You still weren't writing music?

Berger: No, in the two years I was abroad I didn't write. But I was doing analysis and I was getting more and more interested in Stravinsky. And I knew that Boulanger was very close to Stravinsky. In my dissertation, I was going to defend Stravinsky's as the "proper" direction, you see, as opposed to Schoenberg's.

Coppock: How did she work, how did she teach you?

Berger: She did a good deal by innuendo, by the way she illustrated the music. She was an extraordinary score reader. If I illustrated a chord, she would insist I be aware of its precise inflection—the inversion, doubling, registration—and not be satisfied with the generic category to which it could be referred. Her concern with precise local detail went along with her ability to connect the important bass notes to reveal what she called the "grand line"—an underpinning that, in quite a different way, served the purpose of a Schenker structure. She would compare a fine piece of music to one of those sets of Chinese boxes that fit so well into one another, and yet are individually perfect and beautiful and lend themselves to separate scrutiny. The allegro of Mozart's *Dissonance* Quartet, for example—if you played the accompanying instruments alone in the statement of the first theme you would have a thoroughly rewarding piece.

Her methodology and her terminology were those of traditional theory. She did not look favorably upon the deviant analytical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

approaches that fascinated me then as they do now. Without drawing upon Schenker, in considering larger structural issues, she would reduce local chromatic inflections almost to the point of extinction, much as he would. When I'd argue that they might have structural significance, she would deplore the fact that my musicianship, which she granted, was "spoiled" by my intellect.

Coppock: You refer to deviant analytical approaches. Would you elaborate on them?

Berger: Although she approached analysis from a very different vantage point from Schenker's, like him, Boulanger would place a limit on the properties of a local event that could be considered globally significant. This can be very illuminating in separating out at least one aspect of total structure. But there are other aspects, it seems to me. And because music is so complex, with relations on different levels presented to our attention simultaneously, it has to be approached from different angles at different times to be sufficiently understood. The emphasis on unity, on the hierarchy, is a remedy against the old additive approach: the chord-labelling and key-labelling that ignore relationship. But I think we tend to throw the baby out with the bath water. Viewing a composition as if the whole work is spread out before us at once may be necessary and important, but it does not take into account some of the things we experience at a given moment. We have to have all the information in if we are to assess the totality. But having this information, *knowing it,* is obviously quite different from experiencing, feeling events, qualities, or relations embodied in sensuous auditory matter and unfolding in our presence in time. If this were not so, a musical composition would be like a problem with one solution—once we had the solution it would be pointless to listen again. What I'm driving at here is related to something that puzzled a few readers of my birthday tribute to Irving Babbitt in *Perspectives* (1976). I made a distinction between *knowing* music, on the one hand, and *hearing* it with appreciation and/or apprehension, on the other. To apprehend or appreciate it you do not necessarily have to *know* it.

That's why T.S. Eliot could say, after reading Dante, "Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood," and at another time, "There's a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts." I think it comes back to a matter of feeling, though I know it's not good form these days to bring this into an intelligent discussion of music. There is knowing conceptually what a piece is about, and there is feeling what it is about. Often we have no doubt about the way we "hear" or "feel" a given chord. But we are obliged

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to fall back upon the qualifier "ambiguous" because of the problem of naming it. For example, when you arrive at a certain chord, it may have the character of a dominant seventh, but it may function as an augmented sixth in terms of what follows, for example, the allegro of the *Dissonance* Quartet, measures 116 to 120. At the end of the movement you know it has been an augmented sixth in the light of the totality. At the same time, it seems to me that even at that point it is valid information—part of the piece's totality—that in the course of the passage you experienced it in *both* ways: as a dominant in relation to what preceded, as an augmented sixth in relation to what followed. Now is it necessary to name a chord, to reify it? The chord is not a thing. It is a term of a relationship. It is in one relation to what precedes, and in another to what follows. That should not be too difficult a concept for students to grasp, who are well past the Piagetian preteenage developmental stage when they first learned to be at ease with abstractions.

Coppock: So, you're complaining only about the abuse of verbal activity?

Berger: Yes, the substitution of verbal activity for direct, completely absorbed listening. We may find it useful to murmur to ourselves in the learning process, as when we learn to drive. But contrary to a widespread view, it is the naive listener who tells himself what the music is all about as he listens, as if he were still in the classroom. Nothing could be more pedantic than John Cage's notorious silence piece, since you cannot know a piece is in progress unless you are instructed it is, and you then convince yourself it is. And the woefully simplistic, repetitive music currently enjoying a vogue commends itself to listeners because not even the most tone-deaf could fail to notice and label the slightest change from one note or chord to another—there being so few of these. In this connection, I might also mention those pieces that start with material that has no other significance and appeal beyond the fact that something is going to happen to it later in the piece. When I question such material in works my students bring me, and they inform me I will understand it later, I tell them I shall very likely have tuned out through boredom by the time the explanation is vouchsafed. If some people wish to have "conceptual art" it is their prerogative. But it would be well for them to realize that for the sake of novelty they have sacrificed the very essence of the genre. The change is not one of progress within the art, but rather a radical shift on the order of switching, say, from music to dance or even, perhaps, from music to engineering.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coppock: Do you think the recent rash of writing about music came from the general "scientific" movement that affected the other arts as well?

Berger: I prefer leaving questions of origins to the historians, and as to the nature of the "scientific," its meaning is so often challenged today that I hesitate to use the designation altogether. One thing I'm sure of is that we get into trouble when we use it for art in the sense of "natural" science. There's no reason to deprecate the rash of writing which springs from the prevailing self-consciousness of our time. If artists come by creative ideas as a consequence of talking about art, that is all to the good. But it is unfortunate that criticism and analysis become impotent without an awareness of what the composer says he means. What I'm trying to say is that the analysis is not an organic part of the piece.

Coppock: When you returned to this country after studying with Boulanger you went to Mills College and started writing music. How did that come about?

Berger: There was a dancer there, Marian van Tuyl. John Cage and Lou Harrison were writing for her . . . that's more or less where Cage really got his start. Marian asked me to write a piece for her to dance, and she called it *Entertainment Piece.* When Darius Milhaud joined the Mills faculty he told me he liked it. He was very encouraging, and I guess that's what I needed—just some encouragement.

Coppock: But didn't your music also come out of all that work you had done on tonality—all the Stravinsky scores and studying Schenker? You didn't have much hesitation then about what kind of music you were going to write, did you?

Berger: No, I didn't. And don't forget Boulanger. Also, D.W. Prall with whom I had studied aesthetics at Harvard. Thinking through what was involved in creativity paid off. By now I could separate essence from accident. I realized the obligation to write in this style or that, this technique or that, was a demand of the marketplace, a notion borrowed from advertising or fashion. But choice of style or technique is the composer's affair. It must be sufficiently fresh and plastic to enable one to have a firm grip that will prevent the hand from falling into conventional grooves. What is loosely called "neoclassicism" served the purpose then, for the conventions involved are no more than a grid. The Yeats songs followed *Entertainment Piece,* but it is in the woodwind quartet dedicated to Copland that the results of my work in the analysis of classical tonality really became apparent, since it's obviously based on sonata form and Mozart.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coppock: Did you write it in chronological order?

Berger: It's hard to know. I often forget how I've written a piece. Valéry has observed that you may start with a certain plan, but *mille accidents* enter into the creative process, so that by the time you have finished you're not quite sure whether those things that happened in the course of it and diverted your direction were part of the original plan or not. Some people are inspired by a good deal of advance preparation and organization. I don't do that very much, even when I write articles. I don't have a syllabus, and sometimes I suffer as a result, because it means holding things in the head. But it has advantages. I have nothing against other ways, as long as they don't imprison you so that you cannot make discoveries as you go, because sometimes, you know, you find precious things *in* the creative process that you couldn't find *out* of it.

Coppock: So the way you've gone about writing pieces has remained the same?

Berger: That depends. A great deal of precomposition went into my Chamber Concerto of 1960, and since I no longer feel comfortable with that sort of thing, I spent a considerable part of the summer of 1978 revising it. The twelve pitch classes each have a different fixed registral position in each section, covering a wide range and providing the equivalent of a harmonic background. The twelve pitch classes are also used in the foreground in more normal serial order, without fixed register. I worked out a scheme for pushing the pitches around registrally in the background, but I was more concerned that they move around than with *how* they moved around, so that graphic and numerical symmetries sufficed to build in what was, from the point of view of the "heard," an essentially random element. The aim of the revisions was to replace those precompositionally determined sonorities that displeased me. I'm pleased with the revisions, but I do not regret the way I worked on the piece originally. Despite the random elements, in my mind the approach represented a nod to the tendencies evolving around Princeton, which excited me at the time. By training myself to use register more deliberately, it became, in subsequent pieces (the Septet, the Five Pieces for Piano), more "intuitive"—an epithet I use with the understanding that there are "logical intuitions," and that you need not be acting blindly when you fail to spell out to yourself what it is you are doing as you go along. The procedure is no different from what it was in my so-called neoclassic music. The originally systematic planning of the sonorities in the Chamber Concerto still has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something to do with the results, even though these are no longer systematic. No one is going to put me in jail for breaking rules I have imposed upon myself. Their aim is not to be heard as such, but to stimulate creativity.

For *Ideas of Order* I assembled a large number of interval permutations that comprised the stock from which I drew. One otherwise perceptive critic objected that I had not exhausted the supply in my piece. But for me it was enough that they were on my desk. I saw no reason to let the audience in on the act. Those were diatonic intervals, quite unlike the highly disjunct and chromatic intervals I now use. But the point is, I proceeded then as I would now—I did not feel obliged either to exhaust the stock, or to show how one interval was permuted into the other.

Coppock: There are a lot of your piano pieces that aren't available, a lot of piano pieces from the middle forties . . .

Berger: Well, a few are published by firms that have folded, and others, I guess I withdrew. I have a Capriccio . . . and a Fantasy, which has more of *Entertainment Piece* in it than any other work. This is rather corny stuff. I tend to be embarrassed by it now. When I wrote this music, the clichés from pop music were meant as allusion, as parody, but nowadays, they are taken literally, played for laughs—loud laughs ha-ha-ha—whereas at most we anticipated a knowing smile.

Coppock: How long did you run the *Musical Mercury*?

Berger: For about three years, until I went to Europe on my Harvard fellowship in 1937. Jerome Moross and Bernard Herrmann promptly tired of it when they realized that work was involved, and that magazines did not get out by themselves. This was just as well, since it would have been difficult for me to collaborate with them from Cambridge. I guess I never took the magazine too seriously. It was just something in which I could print term papers I wrote at Harvard. When I was more strongly oriented in the direction of musicology, the articles were mainly musicological. But some of the finest fruits the magazine bore were the articles that came later, when I became involved in D.W. Prall's aesthetics. I not only wrote essays on aesthetic subjects myself, but I succeeded in obtaining contributions from such literary luminaries as Delmore Schwartz and Paul Goodman. There was, perhaps, another fine fruit, more difficult to ascertain. I think it was at Brandeis, when he was my student, that Ben Boretz began to entertain the hope of founding *Perspectives*—and this could have been precipitated by his learning of my own past editing experience in *my* student days.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coppock: I take it you had a far better idea of what you were trying to do when you started *Perspectives* than when you started the *Musical Mercury*.

Berger: Oh, yes, yes. Since the demise of Minna Lederman's admirable periodical *Modern Music* in 1946, many of us had felt woefully deprived of an outlet for composers to exchange ideas and keep one another—as well as interested parties—informed of what goes on in the realm of musical creativity. *Perspectives* was to fill that need, but since things had changed quite radically in the fifteen or so intervening years, it would do so in a very different way. Composers in large numbers had found a hospitable place for themselves behind the ivy-covered university walls, and were on the verge—with the widening acceptance of the Ph.D. in composition—of becoming first-class citizens at last. The nature of their speculations in this new environment would naturally be more technical, more inclined to produce analytic and theoretical writing—more in the manner of *Die Reihe*—albeit from a very different point of view than *Modern Music*. A sharply critical appraisal of *Die Reihe* made it clear in our first issue that any resemblance to it was on the surface, while the editorial Ben and I wrote promised to "probe as deeply as possible into fundamental issues," which meant we'd devote more space than *Modern Music* had to quite technical analyses and not have its topical coverage—though we could certainly profit today from the topical coverage at the high level that *Modern Music* provided.

Coppock: You speak of a new outlook shaped by the university. This brings us back to our earlier discussion of talk *about* music. Do you think the university's effect has been salutary? What has your own experience been?

Berger: As I indicated, I happen to passionately favor the talk. It is only harmful if you let it be, if you confuse categories. But such confusion is not a necessary condition of the academy, and as such it is insufficient to cancel the advantages of being sheltered from the assaults of mass culture to which we should otherwise be exposed. Nor should it be assumed, as it occasionally is, that providing such shelter is a charitable act of the university. Earlier we spoke of the importance of direct experience in the arts. This is a species of knowledge—a different kind of knowledge, a knowledge of qualities. But as knowledge it falls within the purlieu of the academy. The university is responsible for cultivating and advancing the art of music. There is a certain awareness of this, but even when the university wants the arts it seems to want them on its own terms.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of course, the most serious need is for the presence of performers of professional caliber on the campus to play our music and that of the students. While there was a time when I was apprehensive of the professional school atmosphere that might result from undertaking responsibility for student performance, I feel now that this too is essential along with professional performance. It is an area in which we can profit by emulating the conservatories, without turning into conservatories ourselves. It is a way of shifting emphasis from the accumulation of facts to the apprehension of qualities. Educational policy committees that regard this sort of thing as manual training should be made to understand its function as being comparable to that of science laboratories. It is utopian, of course, to expect anything as impractical as music to get the subsidy that laboratories have, and there is no doubt that such performances on the campus will need considerable subsidy. But it is not inconceivable, provided that enough people were convinced that serious music is powerfully threatened and is worth saving. Consider, for example, the Woodstock audience, and how dwarfed we are next to it. Also, reviews of rock, jazz, and so on, arrogate space formerly consigned to longhair music in the press. Go on from there to the so called "serious" concert world with—according to Virgil Thomson—its "fifty pieces" that are popular enough by now to qualify as mass culture.

Coppock: How do you feel about Stravinsky's warning to young composers to stay away from university teaching?

Berger: Stravinsky objected to the conformity that academicism engenders, and it should be obvious that I object to this conformity as much as he did. But I'm optimistic enough to believe that the university can be made to understand that if it wants the fine arts, there is an extent to which it must accept them on their own terms—and conformity is not one of those terms. My impression is that much energy is consumed by intradepartmental struggles to reach agreement upon uniform requirements where flexibility is not only more faithful to the subject matter, but more favorable to preparing the student for the creative life ahead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gerald Holton

YOUNG MAN OPPENHEIMER

In many different ways, Robert Oppenheimer managed to be at the center of excitement. Folklore and history remember him most for his leadership in 1943–45, as director of the project that propelled the world into the nuclear age; indeed, he was the first person to push the nuclear button, on July 16, 1945, at the Alamagordo test. But he was also a crucial figure in bringing the United States into the front rank of physical science. Later, he became one of the foremost academic "statesmen of science" who negotiated the change from disengaged science to science as the helpmate of national and international policy. And he played a role in such episodes of recent American history as the rise and fall of McCarthyism, and the acceptance of Jews into the academic professoriate.

All this, and his own excellent work in the physics of quantum field theory, cosmic rays, and nuclear phenomena, should be enough to assure Oppenheimer a place in twentieth-century history. But there is another reason for the recurrent fascination with him. He was often a spellbinding presence; his intelligence and his complex personality shone through hypnotic eyes. It is generally agreed that no one else could have directed so well the large group of prima donna scientists assembled at Los Alamos under the difficult and panic-evoking conditions of war. Even now there is a quasi-charismatic air about his memory, exciting vociferous loyalty among friends and disciples and strong condemnation from opponents. (One of the very few things I can expect my students to have read before coming to college is the Heinar Kipphardt play, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, based on the transcript of the 1954 hearings before the Atomic Energy Commission; and we are presently to be subjected to another television show based on Oppenheimer's life.) On the popular level, he is seen as a tragic hero who, chastened by the discovery of "sin" in the light of the A-bomb, wrestled mightily with his conscience, but in the end made yet another Faustian bargain when Edward Teller suggested a "sweet" solution to the problem of making an H-bomb. Oppenheimer provides an early example of the contemporary dilemma: when society tries to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

harness the drives of science and technology toward omniscience and omnipotence, it often hitches them to short-range social purposes.

On each of these topics, the elegant new book assembled by Alice K. Smith and Charles Weiner* provides some illumination. It gives us over one hundred letters from newly-found caches of Oppenheimer's correspondence, starting at age eighteen, and ends, twenty-three years later, with the previously unpublished text of his farewell address to the Los Alamos scientists in November 1945. The meticulous editors supplement the letters with extensive research and commentary based on earlier interviews with Oppenheimer and on thirty-three interviews with his contemporaries which were conducted especially for this book. This takes the edge off the complaint that any collection of letters has to give a rather slanted view of the person.

Attention centers, perhaps inevitably, on the early period, partly because we are tempted to seek precursors of the later stages of his development, and partly because from the beginning he appears to be an uncommon person, so different from the rather dull-seeming lot that haunts C.P. Snow's novels in fiction, and most laboratory corridors in fact. The correspondence starts when the awkward eighteen-year old, on entering Harvard College, immediately writes to his beloved teacher at the high school of the Ethical Culture Society, Herbert W. Smith, who continued to play the role of mentor, companion, and father-confessor for many years to come. As Oppenheimer himself said later, he was "a properly educated esthete." Oppenheimer was born in New York in 1904. His father was a well-to-do businessman and his mother a trained painter. Oppenheimer's was indeed a *jeunesse dorée* of the best sort, his day starting with breakfast under the Van Goghs in a Riverside Drive apartment.

At school, learning everything easily, writing stories and poetry, Oppenheimer developed a baroque and exaggerated style, evident in many of the early letters, which may have later penetrated his physics—he confessed that "I probably still had a fascination with formalism and complication" before he fully realized the need for "simplicity and clarity." His ambition at Harvard was, first, to study chemistry or mineralogy "with the idea of becoming a mineral engineer." Apparently he had become fascinated with science as a child of five or seven when on a visit to his grandfather in Germany he was given a collection of minerals. In his family one did things in style; so as a high

*Alice K. Smith and Charles Weiner (eds.), *Robert Oppenheimer, Letters and Recollections* (Harvard University Press).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

school graduation gift the boy was staked to a prospecting trip to Czechoslovakia—indeed to the mining center in Joachimsthal, famous for its pitchblende from which uranium salt had long been extracted for the manufacture of glass. It was from here that tons of pitchblende residue had been obtained by Pierre and Marie Curie, who then discovered in it the mysterious substance they called "radium." The same area was to be the main supply of uranium, many years later, for the Nazi attempt to make an atomic bomb. Indeed, the German embargo on the export of uranium ore from Joachimsthal was one of the tell-tale signs noted by Einstein in his letter of 2 August 1939 to Roosevelt, warning that the Germans were on their way.

Oppenheimer visited that mine at a time almost precisely halfway between the Curies' labors and Einstein's letter—one of the mysterious symmetries in his life trajectory that normally are associated only with staged plays. At that excursion, he contracted a nearly fatal case of dysentery, which exacerbated a predisposition to bouts of colitis, melancholia, and periods of deep depression. Again, a strange irony: Having been forced to spend a year at home to recuperate and thereby miss a year before entering college, young Robert was sent on a refreshing trip to New Mexico and the West, Herbert W. Smith serving as companion. The boy fell in love with the wild Southwest—and incidentally came upon a beautiful mesa on which is located the Los Alamos Ranch School. Indeed, the main events in Smith and Weiner's book are balanced between Robert's boyhood visit and, twenty years later, the return trip when Oppenheimer took General Groves to that spot one November afternoon, to propose it as the site for the secret laboratory.

Once in college, Robert immerses himself in chemistry, mathematics, and physics. But it is not clear which of these will win out, and he also stretches in many other directions, continuing his study of languages (he knows Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and German, and later adds Dutch and serious study of Chinese and Sanskrit), and discovering the Widener Library, literature, A. N. Whitehead's philosophy seminar, excursions to Cape Ann. To Smith he writes, "I labor and write innumerable theses, notes, poems, stories, and junk; I go to the math lib. and read and to the phil. lib. and divide my time between Meinherr Russell and the contemplation of a most beautiful and lovely lady who is writing a thesis on Spinoza—charmingly ironic at that, don't you think? I make stenches in three different labs, listen to Allard gossip about Racine, serve tea and talk learnedly to a few lost souls, go

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

off for the weekend to distill the low-grade energy into laughter and exhaustion, read Greek, commit faux pas, search my desk for letters, and wish I were dead."

The various fragments of Oppenheimer's soul are evidently waiting for a magnetic field to line them up. The magnet is his encounter with P.W. Bridgman, the experimentalist who later won the Nobel Prize for his research on high pressure physics, and who was then also developing his operationalist philosophy of science. Later Oppenheimer recalled that with regard to science, Bridgman's course represented "the great point of my time" at college, for Bridgman "didn't articulate a philosophic point of view, but he lived it. . . . He was a man to whom one wanted to be an apprentice."

First, however, Oppenheimer was heading for terrible disappointment. Bridgman later told me with some amusement that young Oppenheimer had come to work on an experimental problem in his laboratory, and at the beginning "didn't know one end of the soldering iron from the other." The delicate suspensions of galvanometers had to be replaced constantly when this apprentice was using them. He stuck with it, measuring the electric conductivity of alloys at high pressures—a kind of apotheosis of his initial interest in minerals and crystals.

But in the early 1920s, a lack of sufficient skill in the laboratory raised serious doubts about the ultimate promise of a would-be physicist in the U.S. (It was still quite unusual for a young American to think of himself as a *theoretical* physicist.) Oppenheimer had his heart set on going to Ernest Rutherford's vigorous, renowned laboratory at Cambridge, England; but he was not accepted for work under Rutherford and had to settle for a place with the septuagenarian J.J. Thomson. That was a major blow, to which was added a bigger one, setting the stage for a devastating year. As Oppenheimer himself said in a letter of about that time, he now recognized that "my genre, whatever it is, is not experimental science." That realization may help explain in part the depression and identity confusion which overtook the young man at that point, just when he was engaged in "the difficult business of making myself for a career" in a place and at a time that accentuated for him his weaknesses and deficiencies. He still had not made the central discovery that every young person must make: in Max Weber's words, to "find and obey the demon that holds the fibers of one's very life."

At twenty-one, Oppenheimer was struggling with the terrible problem of feeling the basic need to look for central scientific ques-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions, but neither seeing them yet with clarity, nor having the ability to cope without deep anguish with the disappointment of remaining on the periphery. A few years later, in one of his beautiful letters to his brother Frank, he hinted at the eventual internal resolution: "I know very well, surely, that physics has a beauty which no other science can match, a rigor, an austerity and depth;" its study induces, and demands, a kind of mental discipline that at its best helps one "achieve serenity, and a certain small but precious measure of freedom from the accidents of incarnation, and charity, and that detachment which preserves the world which it renounces. . . . We come a little to see the world without the gross distortion of personal desire. . . ."

Smith had warned an American friend in Cambridge that Robert, on leaving his earlier, pampered life at college, might find "frigid England hellish, socially and climatically," and that if allowed to be overawed, "he'd merely cease to think his own life worth living." That evidently diagnosed part of the problem, but not the fundamental part. Rather, it was first Robert's bad luck, and later his rescue, that this labile, vulnerable, and brilliant young person passed through a personal crisis in the mid-1920s, at the very time when physics itself was going through its own great transformation, the discovery of Quantum Mechanics—a period which older scientists, from Niels Bohr to Werner Heisenberg, were calling frankly a time of "despair." The difficulty and the breakneck pace of the science, together with the tantalizing glimpses of the great work waiting to be done, clearly exacerbated in Young Man Oppenheimer what can be called euphemistically a serious problem of temperament; and at the same time, it was to put to a test what one of his friends termed Robert's "ability to bring himself up, to figure out what his trouble was and to deal with it."

Even at the best of times, becoming a competent scientist is a hard test—as Oppenheimer himself once counseled, it is "like climbing a mountain in a tunnel: you wouldn't know whether you were coming out above the valley or whether you were ever coming out at all." But as it happened, for Robert the turbulences of the history of physics and of his own psychohistory had come together in a most frustrating way, and it culminated during a Christmas holiday trip to Paris in an episode that showed the severity of the psychological crisis. The editors of the letters say that, apparently without warning, "Robert suddenly leapt upon [Francis] Ferguson [a friend and fellow student from Harvard days] with the clear intention of strangling him. . . . The uncharacteristic display of violence, combined with Robert's despair over his inept performance in the laboratory, and confidences about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unsatisfactory sexual ventures, convinced Francis that his friend was seriously troubled."

Subsequently, there were other melodramatic episodes, periodic visits to a Cambridge psychiatrist, and evidence of continued depression. That spring, Robert told his friend John Edsall that "he had *dementia praecox* and that his psychiatrist had dismissed him because in a case like this further analysis would do more harm than good." To another friend he said at the time he was leaving his psychiatrist because the fellow was too stupid to follow him, and that he knew more about his own troubles than the doctor did.

A word needs to be said about the use in those days of the phrase *dementia praecox*. The same symptoms might now be called borderline schizophrenia, a term that lacks the stigma of deterioration, debility, and irreversibility. Through the work of Erik Erikson and others on the identity formation of young persons, we are now more ready to deal with such episodes. For cases in which, in the past young people were judged to suffer from a "chronic malignant disturbance," we now suspect, in Eriksonian terms, a somewhat delayed developmental crisis. The young person is engaged in two tasks. One is the working through of a "negative identity"—the sum of the fragments which the individual has to submerge in himself as undesirable or irreconcilable; and the other is the development of a positive identity to preserve the promise of a traditionally assured wholeness. Erikson speaks specifically about the rage that can be aroused by threatened identity loss and can explode in arbitrary destructiveness, as well as the more traditional explanation of dangerous or radical alternation between loving and hateful tendencies during transference.

Some day there may exist enough material and skill to attempt a psychobiographical study of Oppenheimer. But it is clear already from these letters that, once he had made the decision not to go back into a laboratory but to throw himself into the grand theoretical problems then attracting some of the best European physicists, Oppenheimer had essentially embarked on a course of self-therapy. Those of us who, as teachers and mentors of young would-be scientists, watch them over a period of a few crucial years, see not infrequently some version of this process of self-identification taking place before our very eyes. For Oppenheimer, joining in the great intellectual drama of transforming physics—"coming into physics"—helped resolve his dilemmas, once he achieved some success. Some psychological damage remained, however, not least a vulnerability that ran through his personality like a geological fault, to be revealed at the next earthquake. Thus, when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oppenheimer was put on secret trial by the AEC Hearing Board in 1954, the supposedly private record made public by the AEC shows clearly how ineffective he was under fire, how he acquiesced in his own destruction. He later wearily explained: "I had very little sense of self."

But the letters of the young Oppenheimer, and reminiscences recorded later both by Oppenheimer and his friends of that period, show that the years 1926-27, spent at the University of Göttingen, produced an inner alignment that formed the armature of his mature self. He met like-minded, challenging people such as Richard Courant, Werner Heisenberg, Gregor Wentzel, and Wolfgang Pauli—a support group with which "I began to have some conversations." The formal and informal education, and the development of his insight in frontier problems, now proceeded at an incredible pace. Early in 1927, he could write from Göttingen (perhaps with much satisfaction) a letter to his former mentor Bridgman, explaining why Bridgman's rather classical theory of metallic conduction—on the basis of which Oppenheimer had embarked on his ill-fated laboratory work—had to be changed, to take into account the new quantum mechanics. At the age of twenty-three he had essentially achieved his goal of making himself "for a career"—if not for a serene life.

Oppenheimer's main professor at Göttingen was, as it happened, Max Born—no easy taskmaster. Enrico Fermi had been so intimidated by Born that Fermi had considered the idea of giving up physics, before being rescued by finding sympathetic tutelage under Paul Ehrenfest in Holland. Born had encountered Oppenheimer on a visit to the Cavendish Laboratory, and they discovered that they were both interested in the same problem, the light spectrum radiated from excited molecules. Within a few months, Oppenheimer had finished his doctoral thesis; his article on the quantum theory of continuous spectra was received at the *Zeitschrift für Physik* on Christmas Eve, 1926. Within a year, he had written four more articles, one of them, with Max Born, a quantum-theoretical treatment of the behavior of molecules which remains in use six decades later ("The Born-Oppenheimer Approximation"). Having passed victoriously through his ordeal, Oppenheimer returned to the United States as a kind of young guru of the new physics. From many job offers, he chose a university at which no one was working in the new quantum mechanics, where he could begin his career of leadership of a major school of theoretical physics. But it is most significant that he also cultivated genuine working relationships with experimental physicists—the happy harvest of his earlier struggles in laboratories, and also a characteristic of the opportunities of the American university system, which did not separate the theoretical and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

experimental departments in the manner standard in European instruction and research.

As it turned out, Oppenheimer's range of interests was to be of great importance to his effectiveness as leader of the Los Alamos project; at that point, the very fate of the civilized world may have depended on it. For, precisely as Einstein and his colleagues had feared in August 1939, the Germans did start on a project to build a nuclear bomb; they began considerably before the antifascist alliance, and had the advantage of excellent and experienced nuclear scientists such as Otto Hahn, in whose laboratory nuclear fission had been first discovered. Obviously world history would have been very different if the Germans, working under the leadership of Heisenberg, had succeeded and the American-British-French effort had failed, or both had failed, or both had succeeded. Why, then, the actual outcome?

This question has been much analyzed, and many plausible reasons proposed, from the lack of sufficient support at the highest political level in Germany, to the Germans' failure to engage in the large industrial operation necessary for the actual production. Such factors undoubtedly played some role. But another factor, rarely noted yet made more evident by Oppenheimer's career formation reflected in his letters, must be the difference in scientific styles that characterized the respective efforts, and in the sociology of the scientific community within which they worked.

In the German project, top responsibility and many of the essential ideas were those of Heisenberg, a theoretical physicist who, in the tradition of his country, had been able to avoid serious training in experimental physics during his formative years. The design of the nuclear reactor pile, strongly influenced by Heisenberg's own ideas, turned out to be quite impractical. Also, at least one and probably two crucial experimental measurements at the outset of the project—the way neutrons diffuse in the graphite lattice of the pile, and the number of neutrons that are freed during fission—were botched, and the mistake not effectively challenged, apparently because in the hierarchical German system, transferred from academia to the bomb project, such challenges from knowledgeable younger people in the laboratory were quite difficult once a Herr Professor had made up his mind on a particular measurement.

On the other side, one of Oppenheimer's first acts on assuming leadership of the Los Alamos group—in fact, a condition he made on accepting the assignment—was that an experimental physicist (John H. Manley) should be provided to assist him. In addition, Oppenheimer interacted easily with knowledgeable experimentalists of any age

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or rank. One of the first tasks the group tackled was to relate the theoretical calculations of nuclear reactions to the experimental data, thereby allowing an estimate of the critical mass of the fission weapon, and its efficiency. Interlacing of the theoretical and experimental aspects was complete under Oppenheimer's influence, and natural for all who worked with him. Moreover, Oppenheimer, the experimentalist *manqué*, was able to keep informed about both theory and experiment, to stretch and supplement his expertise from nuclear physics to metallurgy and ballistics, and by assignment and example help others to do the same. His taste and skills across this whole spectrum provided the essential glue that held the enterprise together. Some roots of this success—for better or worse—were evidently forming in the early period of Oppenheimer's life, as the letters document.

In other ways, Oppenheimer and Heisenberg were rather similar, not least in their unwillingness to oppose military authority, and in not asking or allowing too many questions about the use of a superweapon in wartime. The final irony was that after the war Oppenheimer became the victim of a group in the military who wanted him to be even more subservient to their projects, whereas Heisenberg emerged as the nice chap who succeeded in making most people believe he had not really tried to make a nasty bomb.

For further illumination on Oppenheimer in the period after Los Alamos we shall have to wait for researchers to dig their way through the documents from that period, which Oppenheimer gave to the Library of Congress. Smith and Weiner, in editing their book, wisely decided to stop at the point where Oppenheimer became a public figure and in available letters could no longer afford to reveal his true state of mind. In what has been set before us now, he shows himself not yet able to hide the melancholia and the turmoil of character formation during the period—as he put it in one of his letters written shortly after he had passed through the worst of it himself—that is hardest on "men who combine a certain weakness, timidity, hesitancy of character with a quite robust vanity—or, perhaps more accurately, with an urgent desire for excellence."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Andrew Graham-Yooll

A MATTER OF FEAR*

The car coasted to the curb moving apace with my steps on the sidewalk. It nosed ahead slowly. The hood moved into the field of vision of the corner of one eye, then the brilliance of the windshield came into view. A glance around brought the sight of the small dark hole of a gun muzzle resting on the window frame . . . aimed at me.

My knees reacted first; they did not bend properly. Guilt, due to the existence of a pursuer, gave rise to the feeling, the certainty, that each awkward step was as noticeable as the impeded gait of a severely handicapped person. My feet trod with short hurried steps on a cushion of air, hesitant to touch the ground, to run, or to slow down without a suitable order from me. The men in the car were watching me. The man at the wheel called out something about my beard. I began to turn my head, slowly, stiffly. The car drove away. It was not me they wanted this time.

It was not much more than an instant. There were other, longer, more frightening episodes, but none so acute.

An image of fear is never lost. It is merely filed away for haunting, embarrassing recall at the pass of a car. We all have, perhaps, at least one personal image of fear. This one is with me, from Buenos Aires, where my fear starts, to London; from Madrid to Managua. Terror is paralyzing; hysteria, embarrassing; fear, humiliating. The former two are incidental and fade; the latter, fear, is a constant companion.

When did this fear begin? In 1971, after an article published in the Buenos Aires newspaper described the rape in a bathroom of a girl, a guerrilla accomplice, by one of her guards. The details were supplied by two lawyers, verbatim from her statement to the judge. The article was not signed, but word got around that I had written it—probably by lawyers defending political prisoners.

A man who said he was the girl's boyfriend, but somehow had the look of a policeman, called on me in the newsroom. He sat by my desk

---

*to be included in *Portrait of an Exile*, by Andrew Graham-Yooll, to be published by Junction Books, London, England.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at the *Buenos Aires Herald* all evening and read magazines, but offered little information. He left me wondering. After that, there was a small white Fiat waiting for me late at night at the station when I got out of the train. The car followed me home, or part of the way home, to *Acassuso*, an attractive dormitory on the northern riverside.

The car was there with me. Sometimes only once a week, sometimes every night of the week. As a precaution, I took taxis from the station. The cabbies thought I was mad, until they got accustomed to my madness, and to the low fare they collected. If there were no cabs at the station and the white Fiat was there, I took the long way around, up to Santa Fe Avenue, which was better lit. There, tired prostitutes, aging in the dark, were picked up by bad-tempered motorists and insatiable truck drivers.

After a few days the women began to greet me; they smiled and asked if I had been working hard, and I said, "Not so hard, and you?" My question seemed quite reasonable and they told me whether business was good or bad. The weather, strikes, the mid-month budget restraints were all reasons why fewer motorists stopped for the brief copulative service they offered.

One night the women disappeared for good. In the Odéon cafe, at the corner opposite the train station, the men at the bar said a police corporal at the San Isidro precinct had been squeezing the women for money for some time. On a recent occasion he had become too rough in his demands and had broken one woman's arm.

It was the kind of story that I could not write—hint at possibly—but hints were wasted because people would only ask, "Why bother? Everybody knows that such things go on." The bravado spent on a daring, but sneaky hint was wasted, and I could not summon the courage to tell the whole story.

The walk home became lonelier after that. I kept looking over my shoulder as I walked. I greeted the nightwatchman at the San Isidro fire station, hoping that his awareness of my passage would be some protection. It could not be, of course, but it was a comfort to hear a voice return my greeting at three a.m.

There were many articles in which I dared myself to make brief references to political anomalies, and then fretted about reactions after publication. It was a stupid, not a vicious circle—I compelled myself to report and then waited in terror for the outcome. What is more, this was an exhausting exercise which achieved very little. A naval captain, secretary to the force's commander, wrote to me one day denying that naval intelligence had a dossier which linked me with guerrillas. "If you have a clear conscience, you have nothing to fear," the officer's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

letter said. Of course I did not, and do not, have a clear conscience. Furthermore, mine has always been quite murky, clouded by the timidity of a small man who dreams of great acts of courage but thinks that even the smallest step out of line will bring dire consequences.

"Always walk along the sidewalk facing the oncoming traffic," was the advice given in political circles. "Why?" I asked. "So that you at least have an idea from which car the bullet came," was the smiling reply. In 1973 such advice was given seriously and followed earnestly in Buenos Aires. But I told myself that my identity documents were in order and that I was guilty of nothing; why would anybody have cause to touch me? Then, however, a conscious whisper to my neurosis headquarters said that I had been in some places, talked to some kinds of people. . . . There were friends to remind me that I had been to places such as guerrilla conferences and the offices of undesirable politicians and it was felt that having been to such places and having written for disreputable magazines whose pages harbored stories by extremists or homosexuals were not only crimes, but risks that only a fool would take.

Political conflict took more lives and the neurosis convinced us all—friends, people in business, politicians, and the very ordinary man next door—that our telephones were being bugged—by the government, by the police, or by the guerrillas—depending on which side one was.

A one-legged schoolteacher I had been acquainted with some years before, but whom I had not seen for many months, answered my greeting one day in the center of Buenos Aires with a controlled wave of the hand. Controlled meant the wave should not be seen from too far away and, therefore, his hand did not rise above his waist. I stopped him anyway and he smiled stiffly, a greeting which seemed to tell my boundless egocentricity that he thought I was important. The good feeling slipped away, however, when he mumbled "Well, yes . . . I do read your articles. . . . You are sticking your neck out . . . I don't think I should stand by you too long. . . . People say you are going to be shot. . . ." He hailed a taxi and despite the encumbrance of his artificial leg, he quickly negotiated the traffic, crossed the street, and got into the cab.

It had not been, therefore, a smile of admiring recognition: it had been a wince of precaution. I felt a need to laugh at the incident, to joke about it, and to tell friends about it, trying to provoke their laughter as the only proof that the man's remark was not true. Months later I found out that it was.

After that encounter I began to listen for every car that slowed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down outside my house and to wait for a knock at my door in the early hours telling me that "they" had come.

Burned cars littered the sides of the wide highways leading out of Buenos Aires. Thieves had left them there, after using or stripping them. The carcass that was left made the job of the investigators quite difficult.

Good ideas are always copied.

On many a morning at the end of 1973 the smoldering ruins of cars— fast, new models, not those stripped for parts by thieves—were to be found on rubbish dumps or by the sides of roads. Shantytowns where people feared to walk at night were usually chosen as dumpsites, as if the poor did not have enough troubles without this new one.

In the trunk of the car, or in what had once been a back seat, there were always the charred remnants of one, maybe two, human bodies. The stumps of limbs were tied with wire or chain that had been partially melted and twisted by the heat of the blaze or had been embedded in the charcoal crust that had once been human flesh. The bodies were to be found at dawn beside the branch roads of the Pan American Highway; on the *quema*, the municipal rubbish dump outside Villa Martelli; or in the woods near the Buenos Aires international airport at Ezeiza. It was only at first light that each case was discovered; the fire in the dark had been passed by, ignored by motorists who preferred not to venture off the road. Police did not answer a caller's alarm at night.

After the first few discoveries of bodies disposed of in this manner there were official statements about attempts at identification using what was left of the victims' dentures. Soon the explanations were quietly abandoned and no more were demanded. Extremists of all persuasions—from guerrillas to government-sheltered paramilitary groups to private armies employed by trade union bosses or businessmen—agreed on the method to rid themselves of their captives, of their traitors and informers, and of the bodies of those who had died under their torture or of those summarily executed in the name of some savage cause.

One very hot morning in January 1974, after hearing the early news on the radio, I drove a borrowed car to a place in the woods near the airport. A free-lance cremation had taken place there the night before. Two policemen with machine guns were standing near what had been a car, now a rust-colored scrap on the hubs of its wheels. The two men were frightened, not of the charred bits but of the fantasies that the mind made of them, here, in this beautiful lonely spot, where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the breeze sang a mournful tune in the trees and where families stopped for picnics on Sundays.

The "mess" (*el lio*), as one policeman later referred to what had once been a body, had been taken out of the gutted car. A wisp of smoke rose from a smoldering cable under the half-open hood. The whole mass of metal was still warm, radiating a heat that was suddenly comfortable in that chill and shadowy place at the start of a very hot summer day. The body was on a stretcher without a cover, waiting for a medical officer to wave it away to a crematorium where the job could be finished.

As I went closer, the two policemen, shivering more from the nervous strain of being stationed there since the first gray light than from the strange chill, aimed their guns at me and ordered that I stop at about six paces from the stretcher. I was standing in the ashes of a wide scorched circle of burnt grass. The leaves of the trees in a cluster fifteen yards away were burned brown and, higher up, wilted right to the top of the tallest eucalyptus. (I am worried that my memory no longer holds a good picture of that place, a man-made wood, fifteen miles from the center of Buenos Aires, 500 yards from the highway to the airport. Groups, like bunches, of casuarina trees and eucalyptus rose out of the long grass, with cedars and poplars adding shade. It had beauty at a distance. But Sunday crowds, from the road and from the nearby public swimming pools and sports grounds, littered it with empty bottles, old cans, and newspaper used as an emergency substitute for toilet tissue. But a description of the woods's garden charm mixed with the residue of urban squalor escapes me.)

I told the police that I was a journalist and wanted to have a look. I still smoked then and had a pack of cigarettes. I lit one and offered the pack, from six paces. "Or have you had enough smoke?" I cracked. (Why do the crudest remarks always come to mind at times that demand the caution of solemnity—or do they only come to my mind?) "Don't laugh," I was scolded. "Can't you see how he is, poor thing (*pobrecito*)?" I was a little rattled that they should refer to it as "him." "You mustn't laugh, because you never know what might happen to you," one policeman said. "You never know who he might have been." I shivered too. "He must have been involved," I said, trying to gain their trust, though a little disgusted with myself for currying favor with the two policemen by appearing to discuss what happened from "their" angle. "You never know what people get involved in. That's why one has to be careful nowadays," came one policeman's reply. "In the old days my father kept me under close scrutiny and I respected

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him," he said, assuming that the dead person was young. One of the men came towards me to take the cigarette that I was still offering. As he put it to his lips he shivered again. He said that I should not go nearer. Those were his orders. "I just want to take a quick look," I said. "Then I will go away." He looked around and his mate nodded approval. "Two minutes and no more!"

I walked to the stretcher and whistled softly, more to give the policemen the benefit of an appearance of personal strength than from anything I really felt. "Suntanned, isn't he?" said one policeman and chuckled. The other tutted. There was no body. It was a burnt crust. The arms and legs and head had shrunk to maybe two-thirds of their normal size. "They look like stumps on a gingerbread man," I thought irrelevantly. I wanted to know what was left of the human flesh and I bent over the bundle, but I could only smell the strong, sweet odor of roasted meat. It was, remotely, the smell of barbecued beef, but a little off. It was a sweet smell and I was surprised that I was not revolted by it. In "Spanish Testament," Arthur Koestler describes the smell of burning human bodies as one that was particularly identifiable, as have many reporters and foreign correspondents covering various conflicts. But the horror of the smell must be mostly in the mind. I looked at the skull—"Skol, prosit, chin chin, salud," I thought—to see if it had burst, as I had been told by a wag that the tops of skulls pop with the heat; but there was no evidence of a burst that I could see and only the faintest shape of the front of a head was recognizable.

I walked around to the side of the bundle and bent over it. I glanced up, without lifting my head, to see if the policemen were keeping watch on me. I thought their eyes looked askance, and I wanted to touch the remains. After what felt like hours of hesitation spent bending over the body, I made up my mind and lashed out with my foot. The kick was too hard and I froze almost on contact. The shoe had pushed the crust in roughly below what might have been the rib cage. My toe cap slid from what might have been a bone, or just a hard burned bit which resisted the blow, to enter a hard-surfaced, softer area which fell away in the shape of a toe cap. There was a reddish-yellow looking tissue inside. It was quite dry at first, but then an oily, transparent matter began to ooze out. This had been a human being.

One policeman rushed to me, gripped me by the shoulder, pulled me straight, and pushed me away. He shouted at me for betraying his confidence; yelling, nearly screaming at me for my savagery. Behind him, the other man shouted repeatedly, "Now, let him have it. Let him have it." The man who grabbed me was near shock; as well as being concerned that he would be in trouble when the forensic doctor arrived.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The policeman shouted that I should go away. He threatened to arrest me, and then said I deserved to be shot. The other officer called out, "Yes, yes, let him have it . . . Step aside, I'll shoot him." I yelled, "Don't shoot!" My free hand was in the air in automatic surrender. The other was being squeezed by the policeman, who was shorter than I but thickset. After that I do not know what he shouted, insults I think. I seem to remember many oaths and threats. And I could only squeal in a shrieky voice, "Don't shoot." Finally he pushed me away and I stumbled into the burnt grass and fell, coughing and spluttering as I raised a cloud of ash, calling in tears, "Don't shoot." I crawled to the rim of the ashes and stood shaking in the grass. I heard a safety catch smack and I swung around screaming and pleading. "Go away!" the man who had held me yelled.

I stumbled, my knees missing, my buttocks tight to counter the loosening of my bowels, even though my stomach was empty and felt snarled like a wrung floor mop. For some reason I tried to clean my shoe in the grass by the car. I got into the car and started the engine without looking back, or even ahead for that matter. Later I could not remember turning the car around onto the road. When I looked up, eventually, into the mirror, I saw my face streaked with dried tears and the ash which had been on my hands. I drove the first three miles on the way home at no more than five miles an hour, hoping that the traffic police would not stop me because I would have had to explain the mess my clothes were in. There was no telling, but I could guess quite accurately what the policemen back in the field might do to me if we met again.

It was the abduction of an old lawyer, Silvio Frondizi, aged sixty-seven, a Trotskyist of no great spark, and the elder brother of a former president, that shattered all vestige of calm inside me. It was September 1974, spring in Buenos Aires, and the weather was turning warm and wonderful. There had been about ninety murders in the three months since President Juan Peron's death in early July. The dead ranged from four-months-old children to men of nearly seventy. They were caught in the violent political dispute over the succession to the former strongman's leadership.

It was a Friday afternoon and I was planning to take an early cut from the paper to get to a garden cocktail party near my home. The formula was one of comfort: spring, Friday, and a garden cocktail party. It made the very idea of ninety political murders unreal and something that could not, rather, would not, have happened around me.

The *Noticias Argentinas* wire flashed the report of Frondizi's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

abduction at about three p.m. The domestic news agency had monitored the Federal Police's radio frequency as the news was being reported to police headquarters. The first flash announced that the old man's flat had been raided by unidentified armed men. The second flash added the useless information that the family had been at lunch inside the flat when the door to their apartment was almost thrown off its hinges by the raiders. The third flash said that the old man had been shot and wounded as he was dragged down four flights of stairs and the next cable said that the son-in-law, a twenty-five-year-old engineer, had been shot dead on the sidewalk while trying to pull the old man away from his captors. The old man's wife had been hit several times with the butt of a gun and had been knocked out as she too joined the struggle. The only one who could still stand at the end of the attack was the daughter, by then a widow.

The old lawyer had been bundled into a car waiting at the door of the apartment building, while armed men had taken position behind two large plane trees on the opposite sidewalk. Two cars, one at each end of the block, closed the street to all traffic. None of the three cars had license plates. Uniformed members of the Federal Police, posted two blocks away, had not been called or had stayed away from the street of the raid.

As the story took shape, a free-lance photographer called the paper and asked if I would join him in a spot-check in the Ezeiza woods in case the story ended there. I said that I preferred not to go. I argued that I was busy; I could not leave the paper at that time; I had a cocktail party that night. As I put the telephone down, our own photographer came from the wire room wondering aloud if we should go to Ezeiza. Curiosity took over. Guilt and curiosity really. We called the free-lancer, who had a van, and he came to fetch us.

As the van nosed through the afternoon traffic to get to the Avenida Riccieri which led to the airport, we talked about the attack with what news we had. The old man had been a lawyer for the guerrillas: everybody knew that. Some time later it would be learned that he had kept detailed records of their lives and deaths. He had stored the records in a safe deposit box which had been accidentally searched by investigators following a robbery. One folder revealed the eyewitness account by an imprisoned guerrilla of the deaths of some of his comrades who had been pushed out of a helicopter by their captors in revenge for the murder of several army officers by guerrillas.

A police prowl car with its siren at full scream overtook us but none of the four uniformed men spent a glance our way. Our driver

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said that he would stay as short a time as possible because he wanted to get to the agencies to sell the pictures for the European morning papers. If he moved quickly he could get a good deal. It was all so natural and so reasonable. It was a job.

We were among the first to arrive. The patrol car that had overtaken us had left the road in a cloud of dust and we followed it beyond some trees. The police knew where to go. "They've probably been tipped off by the guys who took him," our driver said. There was no bar to our approach to the body and the two photographers with me went to work before they could be stopped. The two policemen nearest to the body stepped back out of the pictures. Several plainclothesmen stood by two cars that had no markings and no plates, but they did nothing to help the men in uniform and nothing to stop us. As a reporter, I had little to do except ask how long the body had been there and other routine questions. It was nearly two hours since the first flash in the wire room.

The body lay in shallow grass. Blood was on the blades and the clumps of taller weeds were still working themselves upright after being trampled. The blood seeped from the wounds all down the body's left side, from just below the ear on down. The face, half of it, had a look of life. The bursts from one or more machine guns had ripped up his side, down to his thigh. He had been wounded before arrival but had obviously been forced by his killers to stand facing them and then had turned as the trigger was pulled or as the first bullet made his body swerve.

Soon after our arrival, there came the police photographers and a police ambulance. The body was put on a stretcher and loaded into the ambulance. The sight of the body on its back, the head flopped over one end of the stretcher and the face half shot off—one bloody eye and one good one staring up at the sky—made a good photograph. I kept the picture for some time in my terrorist file. But that image kept leaping out of the file and into my mind as I lay in bed awake at night.

I went to the cocktail party and enjoyed it.

The next afternoon I wrote the old man's and the son-in-law's names at the end of the list which was the paper's way of keeping track of those being killed on all sides. A few days later I had a dream in which a man with no face, smartly dressed, but with one side of his coat in tatters and bloody, entered the office, went to my desk, and put my name at the end of the list.

I told my friends about this dream, which was repeated for several nights, to clear myself of it. But it has never gone. I think it reflected a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way of life which I am still trying to describe and about which I have rewritten many times without ever being satisfied that I have quite got it out of my system. My own callousness—cocktails first—returns with all the scenes. The last time I tried to rewrite the story was on a night before I left London for Barcelona. I was in a hurry to finish the latest version and mail it to a friend. I was afraid that if I did not finish the story it might have haunted me during the journey. For some unknown and possibly unreasonable cause, the story comes back to me with a piece of a poem I once wrote and which I did not include in a book because it was a bad poem. The piece, five stanzas, returns with its same bad poetry but heavy rhythm:

> "Do you think contemporaries never age?
> But sit with memories of glory
> Turning fear into a funny story
> For sisters, sons, wives or mothers
> And forgotten faces of battered brothers . . ."

I kept the deaths list for many months. It became the only reliable record of its kind up to the end of 1975, when I stopped keeping track. Members of militant groups came to take copies for their own reference or for publication. As the number of pages grew, those I trusted borrowed the original copy, the only one I kept. They copied it and returned it.

I was terrified one day when my list was mentioned in a paragraph of some outrageous political commentary in a guerrilla-funded magazine. I knew it was my list because some of the transposed dates on my list were reproduced transposed. And later, at a friend's home, reading his accumulated political pamphlets and unaware of his political responsibilities, I found a circular which gave my name as the author of a valuable contribution to the cause. I had the circular and copies destroyed, but I shiver a little at the memory of that paragraph.

The alternative to living with fear is to express shock, as the community at large does, and to realize that the shock is the result of realizing that we are not shocked enough. Nowadays it seems that no incident is sufficiently indecent against humanity to provoke sufficient aversion. And the words begin to ring falsely too. That must be the ultimate fear—that words will stop meaning a feeling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leon Botstein

IMITATIVE LITERACY

Concern over a supposed decline in literacy in America is on the rise. Edwin Newman, John Simon, and William Safire are just three who express their outrage at the frequency of improprieties in speech and writing. Indeed, the crisis in literacy that one now hears about in casual conversation among the sophisticated and the cultured is usually one of usage. People, especially young people, are accused of bad grammar, poor word choice, sloppy construction, poor spelling, and a lack of sensitivity to etymology. College graduates in particular are taken to task for their inability to write simple prose and speak correctly and clearly. Those with the presumption of education appear to be the worst offenders among the ranks of the illiterate. After all, college graduates have had the privilege of higher education and *ought* to be literate. This current clamor about illiteracy reflects a shift from a historic interest in empowering the underprivileged, the poor and dispossessed, with the written word to a fear that the elite, the privileged and affluent, have lost interest in either becoming or remaining literate.

There is indeed a crisis in literacy among the middle classes, among college-bound students and college graduates. At the same time, a catastrophe of illiteracy persists among the poor. The character of these twin problems is related but perhaps is not as obvious as it would seem to be at first glance.

In order to get at the causes of this dual crisis in literacy, one needs to go beyond the misleading nostalgia and satiric moralizing about proper speech and writing that Newman and Simon encourage. Improprieties themselves can reflect a valid choice or an act of sheer ignorance or an act of miseducation where the sense of the importance of language altogether has been lost or significantly altered. The *avant-garde* argument against the tyranny of proprieties in language of the 1950s and 1960s was rebellious. It claimed that "the King's English" failed to convey and evoke the range of expression desired by individuals who refused to accept the ideology of manners and social convention that "good" English seemed to imply. This old and now tired

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

argument has been true in the exceptions. For example, to accuse eminent and original writers and orators of improper usage is foolish. In 1980, this argument of rebellion is heard only faintly, and at that only among ethnic minorities whose rebellion against "good" English has a different and more legitimate basis. Perhaps a decade or so ago this kind of glib cultural critique was used by the white liberal middle class to justify a rejection of a traditional culture. Unfortunately, now all one encounters is the lack of motivation to care about or know language sufficiently well even to rebel against it.

This absence of motivation to become literate, and thereby to recognize correct usage, is widespread and links the new illiteracy among the affluent with the more basic and historic illiteracy of the poor. Rather than view this absence of motivation as the mere legacy of permissiveness in upbringing and laxity in schooling since post-World War II, we should regard the growing evidence of illiteracy among the otherwise educated elite as a misunderstood symptom of a wider and more dangerous educational and cultural dilemma.

Consider the illiteracy of college students and graduates. They are really not illiterate. They can read and write. They fill out complex forms, from the IRS, the ETS, the Census Bureau, and the like, and they function at home and at work using words and grammar to communicate. Their poor usage and lack of cultured speech and prose reflect a revised and an increasingly accepted view of language and literacy. Words and language no longer appear to be common, shared, and liberating instruments for the individual, necessary for personal development and power. Language and the written word have become merely useful tools of defense and survival in society. They have become essentially unattractive skills. Only a new kind of rudimentary knowledge of language is needed for functioning and achieving a stable place in the social structure. Why do college students appear not to care to become literate in a traditional manner acceptable to the outraged critics? The answer is that they have neither the historical sensibility nor the autobiographical experience with the written word or the rhetorically adept spoken word which might convince them that achieving a high level of literacy is either more useful than a minimal command of language or intrinsically worthwhile.

The traditional view of literacy as providing autonomy, freedom, and power has given way to a newer notion of literacy which the young especially have internalized. This new notion of literacy rejects the claim that the command of complex written language will result in the personal and political benefits explicit in the older historic call for mass and universal literacy. The new internalized minimal definition

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of literacy, now an accepted surrogate for literacy in the old sense, has three manifestations.

First, the utilitarian minimum in language use which is now learned is defined by and dependent upon institutions (government, education, and business) and on forces in society external to the individual. The new utilitarian minimum is an opaque, specialized language adapted to a particular social or economic function. Consider the language of government and the academy, both easy targets for the Newmans, Simons, and Safires. The prose of civil and social service personnel is full of somehow useful jargon, pretensions, obfuscation, and self-referential meanings, often in defiance of proper usage.

Second, the level of literacy required for interpersonal contact is nominal in a world of telephones and easy transportation. What is not nominal is impenetrable. The official languages of psychological therapy and interpersonal insight, now commonplace outside of professional contexts, have become specialized and somewhat ludicrous from a common-sense point of view. This is especially noticeable in the interior and self-defining language of communal cults and quasi-religious sects like EST, the "Moonies," the Hare Krishnas, and Scientology.

Third, in industry and business, the standardization of machinery, tools, and parts in the nineteenth century, which permitted interchangeability and a rational base for rapid industrial growth, has developed a twentieth-century linguistic counterpart. The modern language of professions and skilled work for which higher education is required, including business, industry, and social and civil service, has become uniform and specific, standardized, technical, and formulaic. The evolution of computer languages parallels and obliquely illuminates this process. Individuality and idiosyncrasy in prose or speech have become uneconomical and unacceptable in the skilled work place. A novel or elegant use of language would be like putting Rolls-Royce parts into a Ford car; or better, trying to place one's own handmade parts into any car.

Young college-bound students or job-seeking graduates have grown up with a reinforced sense that becoming literate means learning a given, narrow set of special, rational rules for particular functional games in society. They discover that they learn such literacy by imitation. After all, all one needs to command is a narrow range of signs and symbols whose meaning often diverges from common usage. A more general command of English is rendered beside the point of "the good life." English has become splintered into a variety of socially functional and economically programmable languages. Since the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

origin and structure of English are historic and unplanned, English adapts in a clumsy fashion to the new requirements. Unlike FORTRAN, BASIC or APL, the basic elements and logical relations of English must now change radically with the program. If medicine is the program, words and grammar may function one way; if law is the program, another; if business and social work are the software (so to speak), two other grammars and vocabularies emerge; and so on.

Somehow the ideal of a common language has disintegrated. Since 1945, our educational establishments have assisted this erosion of a common language ideal in favor of the development of many surrogate, utilitarian, and technical sublanguages. Literacy, initially a broad, common, and versatile achievement with serious personal and political implications, has turned into a rigid and limiting skill. The traditional belief that literacy is essential for an effective if not noble public political life in a democracy has been replaced by the implicit ideal of literacy as an instrumental, necessary skill in the manipulation of a narrow range of symbols and structures in order to fulfill specialized economic and bureaucratic roles in society. What this linguistic counterpart to nineteenth-century mechanical standardization achieves is the increased dependency of the modern individual on social and economic institutions. If one of the concerns of modern life is the extent to which individuals too often mirror the attitudes, habits, and character of the world around them and too rarely develop a sense of individual identity and character, then the contemporary evolution of language and literacy reflects and accelerates this process.

Consider this short example of the relationship of the change in language use to the loss of autonomy. Trials of lay people who are accused of illegal behavior in financial matters and in personal behavior show a rise in the defendant's claiming innocence as a result of having taken the advice of an expert. Despite new laws requiring clear language in legal documents, this technique gains a new credibility since the average person's defense now includes the claim that they did what they did because they did not really understand the language of the expert and, therefore, what they were advised to do. The ethics of professions (law, accounting, medicine) notwithstanding, the incomprehensibility of a specialized language and the resulting claim of innocence by the argument of total dependency on, for example, a lawyer or accountant whose language is alien and incomprehensible will ring true to a jury of lay people. Despite the legal barriers to claiming ignorance of the laws as a defense, the individual is more capable than ever of trying to avoid moral and ethical responsibility by asserting ignorance in the sense of a new kind of illiteracy. Passive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dependence is fostered by the absence of a common, shared language and the rise of a new technical literacy.

The causes of the new character of literacy and the change in the perception of language and literacy are staggering in social and political terms. The consequences are catastrophic in terms of ideals of a common body politic, social unity, and a shared political process. A crucial conspirator in this development has been higher education. The new definition of literacy is actively supported by the academy. Radical change in the academy's approach to literacy is urgently needed. The sense that higher education can, if it so desires, still do something, derives in part from our conviction that what happens in education before college is quite beyond anyone's control and is subject, at best, to only slow improvement. In contrast, college educators, parents, and students have for decades viewed the college years as a second chance, a place to unlearn and relearn and learn material for the first time. Colleges have the habit of telling the outside world and also complaining to themselves that they must provide remedial services. In 1980 colleges do sense the need to teach basic skills. Although they concede that literacy in any sense should be commonplace among high school graduates, the staffs of colleges have become more and more prepared each year to teach entering college students reading and writing. This recognition of a "back to basics" need should constitute the opportunity if the literacy taught in the university were not, in fact, quintessentially the new ideal of literacy.

Consequently, the good intentions and opportunities in colleges foster a deceptive illusion. Students who complete college—from the community and junior colleges to the Ivy League—fail to become literate in the old, serious way, and yet appear sufficiently and functionally literate in the new way. This is not surprising, for academic professionals are masters of the technical functional jargon which has become the new literacy. Whether the field is English, literary criticism (with its structuralism and semiotics), psychology, sociology, philosophy, or even religion, each discipline has developed a mini-language, a set of patterns of expression and sets of words and phrases. A command of these mini-languages has become essential for professional recognition and institutional advancement in the academy. The faculties of American colleges and universities have, like the rest of the professions, become collectively economically dependent on their ability to manipulate and communicate a narrow, non-common special language officially regarded as legitimate and essential for an academic career.

Teachers in the college classroom are, therefore, the certified

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

professional manipulators of these sublanguages. College faculties appear to students to be the legitimate authorities on the thought in a particular discipline. Getting good grades therefore becomes an act of mimicry, of imitation of the teacher/professional. Students, especially if they enter college truly marginally literate, develop the idea of literacy as the mere adequate adaptation to a packaged ritual of expressions appropriate to a given set of issues, problems, and materials. The use of language is not therefore a reflection of patterns of autonomous thinking or analytical or critical processes. Rather, it is a far more superficial effort of imitative performance, where the student responds not dialectically in argument or debate, but by modeling language use upon established printed authorities or on living role models in the college classroom.

The process of learning language by imitation at the college level might not appear to merit concern. After all, in European secondary schools, French *lycées* and German *gymnasia,* advanced literacy has traditionally been taught often through rigid models of *explication de texte* which require a structured process of imitation by the student. This approach has been compared unfavorably with the American penchant for encouraging among students a more expressive creative use of language without a fixed pattern of responses to assigned texts and issues in the classroom. However, the crucial difference is that the encounter by the student with a text in the European sense requires a personally wrought explication and summary of that text. No matter how imitative the format of that effort, it still requires active reading and analytic thinking. In contrast to the classic *explication de texte,* the imitation fostered in the American classroom is essentially an emulation of style. A student is rewarded for skill in expressing himself or herself in the sophisticated and professional style of, for example, a psychologist or sociologist. The act of imitation encouraged in the contemporary college classroom avoids a critical individual encounter with arguments and thoughts—with content. A's on papers are given more for the imitative accuracy of rhetorical style and technical modes of discourse. The student is shielded from the demand that he or she absorb and recast, in common language, the content of a book, an article, a debate, or an issue.

As a result, the more sophisticated and successful the student, the more adept he or she becomes at this imitative literacy. If and when the student goes on to graduate school or professional education, this process of imitation becomes highly refined. It is reinforced by an intense peer professionalism. The Ph.D. dissertation is one of the most imitative of acts, a ritualized obeisance to authoritative tradition—not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the tradition of the originators of science and learning, of the idealists of *Wissenschaft*, but the tradition of the *epigones*, the bureaucrats of ideas and intellectual skills who dominate the modern professoriate.

It is ironic that the new model of literacy as functional technique is found among our most highly educated. The sense of language use implied by the word literacy as understood by the perhaps romantic elite social reformers of the nineteenth century or by the revolutionaries of Russia and China has vanished. In earlier days, people "without grammar" or "without alphabet" (as foreign words for illiteracy denote) were somehow humanly incomplete. They were deprived of an instrument of progress.

Despite our twentieth-century potential for psychological domination and the recent history of moral camouflage through the manipulation of bureaucratic language evident in Nazi Germany, mass literacy must remain a social goal because of its potential role in the acquisition and maintenance of freedom. True literacy may still be the major social obstacle to total political domination. This possibility helps continue to make illiteracy synonymous with underdevelopment and backwardness. Yet, in the most developed nation, in America, the least backward in the terms of economic development, precisely the patterns of economic development, the techniques of rational modern progress, have overpowered the earlier romantic ideal of literacy. The new emergent literacy is, from the vantage point of those who define literacy in the old way, a prime instrument of subjugation, of passivity, of domination and spiritual enslavement. Literacy has been turned on its head, so to speak, as a political and social objective. Literacy has lost its independent humanistic role. Not only is our world dominated by impersonal, faceless, and obedient bureaucracies and centralized and impenetrable private and public institutions, our careers defined more and more along narrow substantive and institutional lines; but now our speech and writing, our grammar of expression, our words and therefore our thoughts have become the final victims of standardized function. The changing role of language reflects the triumph of the bureaucratic compartmentalizing of our lives in the name of professionalism, the demise of human individuality on a large scale, and, last, the admission of personal powerlessness and insignificance.

It can be argued that the facts and implications of modern life are so terrifyingly complex that in order to survive the individual must resort to a protective, superficial, but functional means of expression. To accept this rationalization for the changing nature of literacy is to give up on the belief that language and discourse are essential for any continuity of the traditional personal and political values of the West.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The academy must find the means and the occasions to break through the almost mechanical expectation among students that to learn is to imitate, to give back the evidence of the new literacy and not to originate or create. One cannot rely on the tradition of literacy. Books and written words have lost their aura of sanctity, of beauty, of culture (in the best sense) for the young. The young have rarely felt that aura. Books and the written word have the status of machine tools, of lathes and power looms, of the turbine and the chain saw. It is not television or comic books or movies or radio—the media—which have turned the young away from language, books, and literacy in the old sense. Rather the reasons are the uses to which language, books, and the printed word, the presumably "proper" use of language, have been put. All the young have experienced at home and in school has been language in its new mode—as mere technical instrument. Their response to language as a utilitarian instrument has been heightened, and they have become deaf to it as a personal, expressive art.

In this way an entire generation has become alienated from true literacy. Its alienation accelerates the erosion of the humanistic character of the literate written and spoken word. The college-bound generation has learned that mere thoughtless aping of the institutional and adult use of language will suffice. The young reveal the extent to which we have lost the recognition of authentic thinking and self-expression through words, and have become satisfied with the surrogate: apparent thought, apparent literacy. One reminder of the distance between authentic literacy and the new literacy is the frequent use of improprieties.

The students now enrolled in American universities and colleges have turned to other media where perhaps there may be more hopeful, newer languages for the remaining small opportunities for what they hope is free experience and expression. They have turned away from book learning and the written word and the institutions which appear dependent on them. They attend school often only out of compulsion, economic and social ambition, and social habit. Ironically, owing to the commercial structure of television and film, as well as sound recording, and their huge capital requirements, nonprint media force the individual to become subject to centralized and potent cultural institutions. In relying on such media, young individuals become dependent on and habituated to being merely consumers and not autonomous makers of expression. Ironically, it is still written language, writing and reading, which are the most potent weapons for people in search of genuine individuality and the effective protection from external domination.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There remains, therefore, substantial truth in the historic aspiration for mass literacy. Active and not passive thinking can be the result of traditional literacy. Critical thinking on complex matters—moral, aesthetic, political, and cognitive—in the West has required and probably will always require the command of written language. Indeed, if literacy is not reclaimed and spread where it has not yet been, the future of thinking and culture may be at stake.

The change in the character of accepted literacy affects the illiterate poor in this country and the truly marginally literate (for instance, our urban high school graduates). The sensibilities of the upper classes, and the apparent shift in the significance and definition of literacy, have filtered down. The suspicion that the new literacy might increase the occasions for the domination of the poor by the rich in economic and political terms has been subtly fueled over the last twenty years. The mistrust of majority-controlled public schooling by the minorities and by the poor has certainly not waned, especially in the cities. Perhaps the poor understand that in terms of the new literacy, language acquisition can prevent a clear expression of ethnic or class consciousness and can help stabilize a functionally subservient role for the poor. Furthermore, if the imitative literacy that the affluent practice is all that literacy means, then the drive for literacy among the poor loses its noneconomic attractiveness, its political and social imperatives. If literacy no longer insures participation in a common language with access to common political and social experiences and opportunities in freedom and power, then even a marginal new literacy among the poor will grow only proportionally to particular skilled labor employment opportunities. In the absence of jobs, no believable exhortations are possible to promote mass literacy. Nevertheless, whatever literacy is spread will be a pale copy of the kind now being recognized and rewarded by the bestowal of baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees.

Where the Safires, the Newmans, and the Simons have gone astray is in their obsession with illiteracy as the target of snobbish contempt. They bemoan a lack of culture, a lack which can easily be cosmetic and superficial and reversed without ever getting at the root of the cultural malaise. To be offended in the manner that the gentry are offended by the improper manners of common folk is to fail to realize that proper use of language alone does not itself show literacy in the true sense. Literacy is the ability to think and express in speech and print complex analytic and critical thoughts and feelings. It is the ability to do so in a clear and easily understood manner, and to retain, manipulate, and command complex ideas and expressions. Proper use of English is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certainly compatible with true literacy and may even be necessary, but it is hardly sufficient. After all, propriety and good usage can easily become part of the new imitative literacy even if elegance perhaps cannot.

What form should the rebellion against the new literacy take? In order to pierce the veil of the new literacy and see the faces of those who cannot think, write, or read critically and clearly, despite formal education, college curricula must force the student to take possession personally of the acts of thinking, speaking, reading, and writing. Colleges should seek the death of merely functional clichés which result from imitative literacy and which shield the users from thinking for themselves. The student cannot be allowed to survive by alienated mimicry.

available in a paperback edition for the first time

ALAN P. MERRIAM

The Anthropology of Music
Alan Merriam's classic study distinguishes music as a human action, as a complex of behavior that resonates throughout the whole cultural organism. This fascinating study is important to ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, and anyone interested in the relationship between human culture and the nature of music. 358 pages
0-8101-0607-8 **$8.95**

ANN BELFORD ULANOV

The Feminine: In Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology.
A study of the feminine aspects of Jungian psychology that argues for recognition of the fundamental sexual polarity of human life. 356 pages
0-8101-0608-6 **$8.25**

8305-25B

Northwestern University Press • 1735 Benson Ave. • Evanston, Illinois, 60201

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Allan Silver

THE LAWYER AND THE SCRIVENER

More than with most literature, a notion of what *Bartleby, The Scrivener* "means" risks diminishing it. The story's sparse line and rich resonance have inspired its critics to much interpretive ingenuity. *Bartleby* comes to readers surrounded by a close foliage of commentary, springing from the anti-bourgeois sensibilities of Melville's critics and such luxuriant themes as alienation and existentialism, the meaningless and the absurd. Criticism made of such pliable stuff has on the whole paid insufficiently sustained attention to the text, tending rather to work with a selection of amenable fragments, each pulsing with some fraction of the story's power. Melville's most perfect short story is not read with the precision it demands.

The story takes place at the very center of mid-nineteenth century commercial society; its subtitle on appearing in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in 1853 was "A Story of Wall-Street." In it figure law suits, clients and colleagues, the hiring and firing of employees, city government, crowded streets and solitary rooms, landlords and tenants, police and a jail—scenes of the modern city. Most readings develop the themes, so richly stated in the literature of our century and the last, associated with city life as an expression of the modern. On these views, Bartleby is Melville himself—the serious writer in commercial society, whose protest is his silence. Or Bartleby is the common man, defeated by the cash nexus. Bartleby is alienated man, anticipating Joseph K. Or he is oppressed labor, sabotaging by mute passivity the social machinery of Wall Street. He is the repressed double of the narrator-lawyer, acting out the despair that underlies a placid commitment to profession and the convention. He is a Christ figure, a martyr of modern life. He is the stranger in the city. He is a schizophrenic or a nihilist. All such views, however, rely on a reading of Bartleby's inner state, and no such reading can be made.

Bartleby's eerie, inexplicable conduct claims total attention. The lawyer begins his narrative with expressions of wonder at the scrivener, "the strangest I ever saw or heard of," and breaks off to speak of himself and his world only "because some such description is indispensable to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented." The lawyer plainly speaks for the average man as early bourgeois; the minor eccentricities of his other employees are the foibles of ordinary clerks; and all others in the story literally go about their business—save for Bartleby, who neither goes about nor does anything. The story's name is Bartleby's. The lawyer remains anonymous as do all others, save for those who have nicknames or quintessential ones—like "Mr. Cutlets," the prison"grub-man"; indeed, no one in the story but Bartleby, its least real person, has a real or personal name. Thus, all lines seem to converge on Bartleby. Yet the story offers no way into Bartleby; rather, Bartleby illuminates the ordinary world about him. As some of the story's commentators have seen, its center is not the scrivener but the lawyer.

That we know Bartleby only as he affects the lawyer has deterred few critics from constructing an inner existence for the scrivener. Yet the limits to our knowledge of Bartleby are plainly stated at the very outset:

> While of other law-copyists I might write the complete life, of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done. I believe that no materials exist for a satisfactory biography of this man. It is an irreparable loss to literature. Bartleby was one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable, except from the original sources, and in his case those are very small. What my own astonished eyes saw of Bartleby, *that* is all I know of him, except, indeed, one vague report which will appear in the sequel.

Melville begins by establishing a strict rule: we know nothing of Bartleby save that which the lawyer's "own astonished eyes" see: like the lawyer, *that* is all we can know of him. Midway in the tale, the lawyer sees that his "assumptions" about Bartleby's purposes and intents were "simply my own, and none of Bartleby's." The critics have largely taken this as an occasion to draw upon the dense cluster of ideas that swirl about the anguish of Modern Man, reading one or another of them into Bartleby. They encourage readers to take a position superior, in moral stance and subtle perceptiveness, to that of the story's narrator. But Melville's text really requires us not to assume that we can know Bartleby any better than the lawyer can.

The lawyer indeed begins by seeking comprehensible reasons for Bartleby's refusal to work:

> Recovering myself, I . . . demanded the reason for such extraordinary conduct.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> "Why do you refuse?"
> "I would prefer not to."
> . . . I began to reason with him.
> "These are your own copies we are about to examine. It is labor saving to you. . . . It is common usage. Every copyist is bound to help examine his copy. Is it not so? Will you not speak? Answer!"
> "I prefer not to," he replied in a flute-like tone. It seemed to me that while I had been addressing him, he carefully revolved every statement that I made; fully comprehended the meaning; could not gainsay the irresistible conclusion; but, at the same time, some paramount consideration prevailed with him to reply as he did.

The paramount consideration only "seemed" to the lawyer to exist, as does his account of Bartleby's reaction; whether it does or not, we cannot know. Rather than seek it, however ingeniously, we do better to consider the palpable terms of Bartleby's refusal. It tells us much. As the lawyer observes, despairing of his attempts to understand Bartleby's behavior, Bartleby is "more a man of preferences than of assumptions."

The formula of refusal both announces and aggravates the act. It invites inquiries, which are themselves refused. Having ceased to verify copy, Bartleby refuses to go to the post office, "but a three minute walk":

> "I would prefer not to."
> "You *will* not?"
> "I *prefer* not."

To state a preference is both to choose and to explain the bases of choice. But Bartleby also refuses to explain his "preferences." They might grow from affirmation—"I *will* not"; or from inability—I cannot. Just as the lawyer seeks here to interpret refusal in terms of will, he later seeks to do so in terms of necessity, when Bartleby stops performing the very *raison d'être* of scriveners, the act of copying:

> "Why, how now? What next?" exclaimed I, "Do no more writing?"
> "No more."
> "And what is the reason?"
> "Do you not see the reason for yourself?" he indifferently replied.

The lawyer must supply his own reasons. He thinks that Bartleby's "eyes looked dull and glazed," and concludes that they are strained by his "unexampled diligence in copying by his dim window. . . ." Touched, he instantly pardons Bartleby and encourages him to rest and take fresh air—which, of course, he does not do. The story continues:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Still added days went by. Whether Bartleby's eyes improved or not, I could not say. To all appearance, I thought they did. But when I asked him if they did, he vouchsafed no answer. At all events, he would do no copying. At last, in reply to my urgings, he informed me that he had permanently given up copying.
>
> "What!" exclaimed I, "suppose your eyes should get entirely well—better than ever before—would you not copy then?"
>
> "I have given up copying" he answered, and slid aside.

Bartleby's preferences cannot be understood in terms either of wishes or necessities; both can only be the lawyer's—and reader's—assumptions.

The story proceeds in part by deepening and extending both Bartleby's refusals and the lawyer's outrage and solicitude. But it also moves powerfully: by its end, much has happened. Nothing, however, seems to happen to Bartleby, whose very death continues his life—not only in the lawyer's anticipatory vision (he sees the "scrivener's pale form . . . laid out, among uncaring strangers") but in the sequel's image of Bartleby as a clerk in the "Dead Letter Office at Washington." Rather, all movement is the lawyer's—set off both against Bartleby's utter remoteness and the mere, recurrent busyness of his clients and colleagues, his other employees, and his fellow New Yorkers. It is his story not only because, as narrator, he tells it, but because it is only to him that things happen and meanings occur. Turning to him, we turn to the story itself.

Few critics deal adequately with the lawyer. They are usually severe about his conventionalism, his incapacity to meet the challenge imposed by Bartleby, or to comprehend it; at most they see him as at best well-intentioned but as inconsistent, embodying the deficiencies of business culture. This is not wholly wrong, but it is unjust and therefore inadequate. His voice merits a less condescending hearing:

> So true it is, and so terrible too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. The scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach.

The language is that of a prudent and conventionally sympathetic man, but these are not the thoughts of a man merely prudent or conventional. And, clearly, his efforts to help Bartleby press hard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against these limits. The lawyer is indeed a limited man, but this is precisely why his moral career throughout the story commands a certain respect. We must seek to know him better.

In response to an advertisement, a stranger appears at an office door, is hired, sets to work. Melville restricts description to defining essentials. Bartleby does not enter the lawyer's office and employ; the door is already open—"for it was summer"—and Bartleby—"a motionless young man"—stands at its threshold. He has no prior existence, implied by passing from the world of anonymous strangers to employment; he does not approach, knock, seek and gain entrance, state his purpose. He comes into existence in the very act of employment—itself pure in its minimal character: "After a few words touching his qualifications, I engaged him. . . ." So satisfied is the lawyer with his scrivener that he places Bartleby's desk in his own office "so as to have this quiet man within easy call." Moreover:

> Still further to a satisfactory arrangement, I procured a high green folding screen which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not from my voice. And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined.

Association is mediated by the voice of command; proximity controlled by separation of function; privacy of person and society of labor are joined. Bartleby does "an extraordinary quantity of writing," day and night. The lawyer would have been "quite delighted" save that Bartleby writes on "silently, palely, mechanically."

It is from this tableau, framed by the lawyer's benign but firm moral conventionalism, that the story departs. One rhythm dominates: the lawyer's widening oscillation between, on one side, resentment, repugnance and fear; and, on the other, helpfulness, compassion, increasingly encompassing offers of aid. Each refusal of Bartleby's provokes greater aversion; each access of frustration or anger, a greater measure of engagement. At climactic points, the two emotions fuse: "Strange to say," the lawyer remarks, "I tore myself from him whom I had so longed to be rid of." Between these surges of feeling, the lawyer accepts Bartleby's silent, unproductive presence on the basis of a morality which, though conventional, is not quite conventionally expressed:

> He is useful to me; I can get along with him. If I turn him away, the chances are that he will fall in with some less indulgent employer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> and then he will be rudely treated, and perhaps driven forth miserably to starve. Yes. Here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval. To befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange willfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience.

The lawyer is not merely fatuous; it does not escape him that this test of Christian virtue is mild and easy.

His restraint attains new levels upon discovering—"One Sunday morning I happened to go to Trinity Church, to hear a celebrated preacher"—that Bartleby has been living in his office. Melville conjures up a tremendous image of utter solitude, that of Bartleby among the empty rooms, buildings, and streets of Wall Street on Sunday. "For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized me," the lawyer says, "but just in proportion as the forlornness of Bartleby grew and grew to my imagination, did that same melancholy merge into fear, that pity into repulsion." After further attempts to dismiss and rid himself of Bartleby, he attains a resolution it is too easy merely to deride:

> Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen. . . . At last I see it, I feel it; I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life. I am content. Others may have loftier parts to enact; but my mission in this world, Bartleby, is to furnish you with office room for such period as you may see fit to remain.

This position is purged of pallid Christianity and self-congratulation. The lawyer accepts obligations which bring no reward and make no sense. But "this wise and blessed state of mind," as he calls it, does not survive the reactions of colleagues to Bartleby's eerie presence, which threaten his professional reputation. He weakens, blaming "the constant friction of illiberal minds," yet is still unable to do the obvious—have Bartleby ejected by force of law. He moves instead to another office, leaving the still, unspeaking Bartleby behind in an empty room. Turned out by the new tenant, Bartleby "haunts" the building, and landlord and tenant demand of the lawyer that he act. "In vain I persisted that Bartleby was nothing to me—no more than to anyone else. In vain:—I was the last person known to have anything to do with him, and they held me to the terrible account." The bond with Bartleby is not his either to satisfy or to sever.

In the story's longest dialogue, narrator and reader are led to hope for a resolution: "His unwonted wordiness inspirited me. I returned to the charge." But Bartleby, though "not particular," refuses five suc-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cessive offers of help in obtaining new employment. The last has about it a sort of grotesquely desperate humor: to go "as a companion to Europe, to entertain some young gentleman with your conversation—how would that suit you?" Upon Bartleby's refusal—his final "I like to be stationary. But I am not particular" points toward an infinity of offers and refusals—the lawyer reaches the outermost limits of his oscillation between engagement and flight. He loses "all patience . . . for the first time in all my exasperating connection with him" and flies "into a passion. . . . Despairing of all further efforts, I was precipitately leaving him when a final thought occurred to me. . . ." The lawyer, "in the kindest tone I could assume," invites Bartleby "not to my office, but my dwelling," to live there "until we can conclude upon some convenient arrangement for you at our leisure"—surely, that is, forever. The lawyer accepts the burden of Bartleby not only indefinitely, but with his whole life: not only in his office—where he had used a screen to "isolate Bartleby from my sight" while "privacy and society were conjoined"—but in his dwelling, where such a screen has no place. Indeed, this is the only occasion on which we hear of the lawyer as a private person—as one who dwells in a home as well as one who practices law in chambers, attends church, visits a jail, moves about the streets and environs of New York. This fleeting passage hints at the lawyer's private, more fully human existence—and simultaneously has him offer this fuller humanity to Bartleby.

Refused, the lawyer has no more words, but rushes away. Having done all possible, he "now strove to be entirely carefree and quiescent." He drives "about the upper part of the town through the suburbs, in my rockaway; crossed over to Jersey City and Hoboken, and paid fugitive visits to Manhattanville and Astoria"—an oscillating flight around the stationary Bartleby, to whom, even in flight, he remains bound. Returning, he learns that his former landlord has had the police take Bartleby to the Tombs, and finds Bartleby in the innermost of the prison's "inclosed grass-platted yards," staring towards a "dead-wall," as he had done endlessly in the office. In a movement the force of which is amplified by its minimal but definite character, Bartleby passes suddenly from inscrutable refusal and silence to a single act of accusation and reproach: "I know you, and I want nothing to say to you. . . . I know where I am." The lawyer arranges for Bartleby to be well fed (though he of course refuses food); returning later—no reason is given—he finds Bartleby dead before the prison wall. He closes Bartleby's eyes—the common gesture at death, but here endowed with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

uncommon precision. He, who in both life and death stared at walls, now stares at them no longer. It is all the lawyer ever succeeds in doing for Bartleby.

The story ends; only the sequel's "vague report" remains. It is a story of helplessness—not that of Bartleby, but of the lawyer. The lawyer's limits constitute his humanity, which we share. He invites not condescension but fellow feeling. His story is one of unconsummated compassion offered by one who—struggling against impatience, convention, aversion—grows in moral accomplishment to the boundaries of his possibilities and of ours. To ascribe the story's course to failings of the lawyer as a mere man of business, or to an inner condition of Bartleby's, is to shirk its demands and violate its texture. We must rather ask why one who seems silently to shriek for help not merely refuses it but stands entirely outside the scope of human engagement, and why another, who does all he—or we—possibly could to help, is in the end reproached.

We are concerned, then, with the story's evident problem—that of helping and helplessness. There are moral claims in the world of Wall Street which both attract and repel, which the best efforts of ordinary men cannot compass, but which they cannot disown though struggling to do so. Dominant readings of the story have seen it as a demonstration that market society dissolves binding ties, producing unspeakable wretchedness and a deficient morality. Yet the text does not sustain crucial aspects of such readings; moreover, the sense of history on which they rely is inadequate. *Bartleby* does indeed address issues of personal morality distinctive to our time, but to get these right we must situate Melville's Wall Street both more precisely and more broadly. From it we must look backward to grasp its problematic character in terms contemporary with the story and forward to locate within the story itself the exact source of its resonance with our own time.

Underlying many views of *Bartleby* has been a historical vision of which it is useful to cite a version at once Marxist and romantic:

> Bourgeois social relations, by transforming . . . all tender relations between men to relations between commodities, prepare their own doom. The threads that bind feudal lord to liege, chief to tribe, patriarch to household slave, father to son, because they are tender are strong. But those that bind shareholder to wage-employee, civil servant to tax-payer, and all men to the impersonal market, because they are mere cash and devoid of tender relations, cannot hold.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Allowing for rhetorical changes since Christopher Caudwell wrote this in the thirties, some such indictment persists. It is in large part a sentimental vision, doubly derived from the young Marx and the romantic recoil from commercial society, which produced cultural and theoretical formulations that have deeply influenced our perceptions. Thus Tönnies's condemnation in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* of modern society as a hypocritically disguised form of market dealings, in which "formless contracts are made continuously." Thus, in *Passage to India*, Aziz bursts out to Fielding at the most intense moment of their bond, "If you are right, there is no point in any friendship; it all comes down to give and take, or give and return, which is disgusting. . . ."

The lawyer, however, acts in accordance with an ethic formulated during the transition to pervasively market and bureaucratic society. Employment might still retain a household character, shaped by the language of masters and men; the imagery of "stations" and "duties" might still suffuse the new forms of labor. Among many others, the Anglican moralist William Paley articulated the obligations of superior status in his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, published in 1785 and republished innumerable times in America, where it was the principal college text in moral philosophy through the middle of the century:

> I use the term Charity neither in the common sense of bounty to the poor, nor in St. Paul's sense of benevolence to all mankind: but I apply it . . . to signify the *promoting the happiness of our inferiors* . . . . Charity, in this sense, I take to be the principal province of virtue and religion: for whilst worldly prudence will direct our behavior towards our superiors, and politeness towards our equals, there is little beside the consideration of duty, or habitual humanity . . . to produce a proper conduct towards those who are beneath us, and dependent on us.
>
> There are three principal methods of promoting the happiness of our inferiors:
>
> 1. By the treatment of our domestics and dependents.
> 2. By professional assistance.
> 3. By pecuniary bounty.

The lawyer strives to apply this ethic. He struggles to treat Bartleby compassionately, offers to find him new employment, and twice offers money. His voice at first is, like Paley's, that of one accustomed to his station, confident that the expedient and the moral are compatible. This is less the stance of an early capitalist than of a professional gentleman who, though active, belongs to a past begin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ning to recede. "I am a rather elderly man" are his and the story's first words. His career has lasted thirty years. A bit later he reveals in passing that he is "not far from sixty." His need for an additional scrivener arose when he obtained "the good old office, now extinct in the State of New York, of a Master in Chancery"—extinct because abrogated by a new constitution. Having established himself as an easy and peaceful man, he gives way to petulance in describing the loss of this office and its profits—he "had counted upon a life-lease"—and there is a spurt of such words as "dangerous indignation," "wrongs and outrages," "rash" and "violent," culminating in a strong expression which Melville obscures by a conventional dash; these are his only powerful emotions unconnected with Bartleby. His age and attachment to obsolescent institutions, his resentment of bureaucratic reforms, his ingenuous pride in having been employed by John Jacob Astor, who came to America in 1783 and retired from business in 1839—all describe a man of a time and place that are fading, not of the Wall Street to come. Striving for calm reconciliation to Bartleby's unending presence, the lawyer "looked a little into 'Edwards on the Will,' and 'Priestley on Necessity.'" The first, published in 1754, was a classic statement of Calvinist predetermination; the second, an argument for a determinist theory of volition, appeared in 1778. At a time preceeding Wall Street's fuller emergence as a center of capital formation, the lawyer struggles to apply to Bartleby an ethic more redolent of developed commerce than of capitalism.

We see him successfully applying this ethic in the long opening passages that describe Turkey and Nippers, his two scriveners of long standing. Tolerating their recurrent failings—one is ill-suited to work in the mornings, the other in the afternoons—the business of his office runs smoothly as "their fits relieved each other like guards," never cumulating. "This was a good natural arrangement," he remarks. It is a picture of moral accomplishment in creating a social order in which personal obligations of a kindly but bland texture coexist easily with the requirements of business. Turkey's temperament turns somewhat manic after the noon hour, causing him to make mistakes. Desiring nevertheless to keep him on, the lawyer hints "very kindly that perhaps now that he was growing old, it might be well to abridge his labors . . . he need not come to my chambers after twelve o'clock but . . . had best go home . . . and rest himself till tea-time." Turkey refuses, and, elsewhere in the story:

> "But the blots, Turkey," intimated I.
> "True,—but, with submission, sir, behold these hairs! I am getting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> old. Surely, sir, a blot or two of a warm afternoon is not to be severely urged against grey hairs. Old age—even if it blot the page—is honorable. With submission, sir, we *both* are getting old."
>
> This appeal to my fellow-feeling was hardly to be resisted. At all events, I saw that go he would not. So I made up my mind to let him stay, resolving, nevertheless, to see to it, that during the afternoon he had to do with my less important papers.

The lawyer's disposition to tolerate faults and relieve difficulty, a mixture of calculation and kindliness, his belief that efficiency and humaneness are compatible, his inability to impose his will on an employee who refuses to depart, his readiness to adopt practical compromise, and his quick sympathy—all anticipate the coming of Bartleby in miniature and mundane terms. Unlike Turkey's refusal, Bartleby's carries him far past the point of continuing to be a dependent or inferior. Yet the lawyer clearly persists in deepening moral implication, even after Bartleby ceases to be a hired scrivener who refuses to do anything, even after the lawyer has left him behind in empty chambers. Why does the lawyer persist, beyond the limits both of station and employment?

The author of market theory's seminal classic, Adam Smith, remarked on the growing formlessness of social obligation in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759 and extensively revised for an edition of 1790:

> The general rules which determine what are the offices of prudence, of charity, of generosity, of gratitude, of friendship, are in so many respects loose and inaccurate, admit of so many exceptions, and require so many modifications, that it is scarce possible to regulate our conduct entirely by a regard to them. . . . The actions required by friendship, humanity, hospitality, generosity are . . . vague and indeterminate.

Smith's treatise—obviously more "progressive" than Paley's—formulated an ethic based on an essentially deistic social psychology, meant to accompany the new economic relations of commercial society. Central to this ethic were the "moral sentiments," of which "sympathy" was the most important. "Sympathy" forms moral connections among individuated persons, through which social acts—among them aid, compassion, charity, commiseration, sharing, empathy, congeniality—flow in daily life. In Smith's view, however, sympathy is not a moral imperative nor an irrepressible "passion." Nor is it the capacity for cooperative responsiveness, the product of moralizing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social experience, that it became for American academic social psychologists—Cooley, Baldwin, Ross and others—around the turn of this century. It is, rather, a faculty set in motion by the contemplation of others' states of feeling and being—unless these are too extreme to evoke a response, as one object, vibrating at a certain frequency, may not evoke "sympathetic vibration" in another. Since humanity seeks what Smith called "the pleasure of mutual sympathy," extremes of conduct are automatically moderated by a diffuse system of social control. It is not formal obligations, defined by station, but the working of the moral sentiments that shapes the behavior of persons as they seek and express sympathy in social encounters. Fellow feeling and helpfulness are distributed more uniformly than was conceivable when obligations were defined by corporate social organization—by exclusivistic bonds of helping and alliance like those of lordship, clientage and patriarchy. As a pervasive social lubrication, sympathy minimizes the possibilities of moral ecstasy, anxiety and betrayal; personal obligations assume a universal aspect, both in content and scope of application, and thus are fit into the universalism required by market and bureaucratic society.

In contrast, specific and defined practical imperatives run through historical accounts of helping bonds prior to commercial society. The forms of obligation turned on the exchange of services and resources which, by definition, excluded those not parties to the bond. The strong feelings Caudwell calls "tender" were not authentically personal in the modern sense. In the great exemplary prototypes—for example, Roland and Oliver, or Amis and Amiloun—others are treasured for superbly manifesting public virtues—fighting ability, courage, wise counsel, loyalty, the modern counterparts of which are money, power, status; all are public virtues whose excellence is their capacity to wring rewards from a competitive world.

The troubled concern of the Renaissance with formal bonds of helping and obligation provides a point of entry into the historical sequence leading to the ethics of Smith and Paley, and beyond them to our own time. The Elizabethans saw in lordship and loyal service, in friendship and trustworthy alliance, both selflessness at its noblest and betrayal at its sharpest. The partial modernization of polity and economy meant that the noble class, drawing upon households, dependents, and personal alliances with equals, reliably commanded fewer resources in advancing and defending its interests. Trust, obligation, and loyalty became intensely problematic and idealized when late feudal forms of personal obligation were badly frayed yet still much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

needed, when joint enterprise still required the collaboration of personal allies. Horatio, for example, is less a modern personal friend than a perfect confidant, sharing and aiding his "lord's" stratagems, keeping them in confidence, immune to passion and flattery. He remains alive only on Hamlet's charge to "report me and my cause aright," evoking the obligation of late medieval brothers-in-arms to inherit feuds and "maintain causes." His counterpoint with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—not figures of fun, but authentically dangerous false friends from whom Hamlet is safe only because he early detects their "insinuation"—is carefully arranged. The poignancy of Hamlet's bond with Horatio is only in part due to its "personal" aspect; it is in a tradition of formal obligation which, because no longer reliable, was the more precious in a dangerous world. Wishing to die, Horatio compares himself to "the antique Roman"—summoning the classical models of loyalty, rather than the "Dane," the man of his own treacherous times.

As the network of bureaucracy and market exchange spread in the centuries that followed, distaste mounted in some circles for the conscious, practical reciprocities that had marked "personal" bonds in the Western cultural tradition. The frankly utilitarian aspects of bonded loyalties were sometimes obscured by anachronistic sentimentality, strengthening the distaste for new times. Ideal forms of helping and loyalty became both a refuge and an implied criticism of the public sphere—they are of high quality precisely to the extent that they invert the rules of the great society. In the ideal Commonwealth, the bourgeois *polis*, men seek peaceably to exchange equivalent values, so that each benefits and neither loses; in such exchanges, virtue lies in utility, justice in equivalence, probity in impersonality. But forms of personal helping embedded in bonds of private loyalties and friendships are diminished to the extent that they rest frankly on such foundations; rather, they celebrate the unconditional commitment of persons cherished not for their public resources but their unique value as private beings. The stronger and purer such bonds, the less they resemble the ways of the world.

The eighteenth century moralists did not share in this romantic or reactive response. Elizabethan administrators, merchants, and early capitalists, according to Benjamin Nelson's *The Idea of Usury*, deprecated the "cult of friendship"—the strenuous celebration of personal loyalty and self-sacrificing helpfulness as a heroic virtue patterned on the old social forms. Similarly, the eighteenth century moralists of a society becoming pervasively commercial sought to shape personal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

obligations in ways compatible with the texture of the market. The high emotion that had surrounded both the fulfillment and problems of obligation and help two centuries earlier had by the late eighteenth century subsided into puzzled uncertainty or calm and routinized moralities—benevolence, sympathy, charity, prudence—which defined the character of personal obligations in the newly uniform civil society.

This is the moral world that Bartleby's presence disturbs. He is wholly beyond the other scriveners' "eccentricities", as the lawyer calls them. Starting as the most assiduous of scriveners, unconcerned with the little social universe of the lawyer's chambers, Bartleby seems rapidly to withdraw from all social bonds and reciprocities—not in response to the lawyer's efforts, but in the course of being that which he has always been. The lawyer exhausts the possibilities of charity and sympathy; yet he moves beyond the measured generosity of Paley's "three principal methods of promoting the happiness of our inferiors" and past the limits of sympathy "where melancholy merges with fear, pity into repulsion", into searing, ineffectual compassion.

It is a remarkable performance, given its starting point. Yet Bartleby remains both helpless and unhelpable and, despite his strenuous effort and the recurrent rage that Bartleby inspires, the lawyer is "upbraided" both by Bartleby and his own surprised self. Somehow he has failed—not only to relieve Bartleby, but to do what he might have done. Persisting in moral implication, even though Bartleby's unending, stationary presence dissolves the forms and contents of his moral code, the lawyer ventures unknowingly towards our own time. For the story does more than strain and shatter an early business morality. It also says something about the character of helping bonds in the whole of modern culture.

Bartleby's presence imposes a limitless test on the lawyer. Bartleby quickly ceases to exchange services for payment, fulfills no social reciprocity, makes no need known, seems not even to ignore—it is as if they are not—all attempts to help him. Yet the lawyer moves through mounting distress to deepening though resigned commitment. As the unbounded character of Bartleby's apparent demands emerges, the lawyer's response comes to anticipate a moral tone of our own, more formless time. We cannot know, nor need we ask, why Bartleby is wholly unhelpable, but our own experience hints at the lawyer's oscillating ambivalence, his bewildered failure, and his indignation and agreement at being reproached.

Helping bonds in the modern world are potentially limitless because they are no longer set in a structure of specified obligations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They are morally bounded only by our capacities to meet them. The better the friend, the closer the bond, the less defined the potential demands. We cannot know in advance all that may be required of us. Scarcity and prudence may constrain our responses, but we must justify each limitation. The closer the bond, the more the burden of justification is on us who are asked, not one who asks of us. No matter how reasonable our refusal, that we refuse at all must diminish us in terms of the ideal forms of helping that inhabit the private life of the modern world. Because they are limitless, the ideal forms of helping contain an intrinsic failure. No matter what we may accomplish, there lies beyond the shimmering possibility of yet further achievements of disinterestedness, generosity, and helpfulness. We can never do enough—not simply because others' needs are insatiable or refractory, but because we have no firm, controlling forms that shape the judgment of moral achievement as obligated helpers.

The sequel fixes the story's center in a metaphor of complex precision. The lawyer has heard "one little item of rumor" about Bartleby's past; though "hardly knowing whether I should divulge" it, and though "how true it is I cannot now tell," he decides to "briefly mention it" for its "certain strange suggestive interest":

> The report was this: that Bartleby had been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington, from which he had been suddenly removed by a change in the administration. When I think over this rumor, I cannot adequately express the emotions which seize me. Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cart-load they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk tames a ring:-the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity:-he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death.
>
> Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!

The little item of rumor is told in one sentence of bare factuality. The lawyer's emotions alone create the sequel's extraordinary imagery. His vivid elaboration of the uncertain report maintains him as the story's sole center of experience and meaning. Seeking to dismiss

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bartleby, the lawyer had offered to continue by mail the moral bond he feels: "If hereafter in your new place of abode I can be of service to you, do not fail to advise me by letter." Letters express the possibility of helpfulness infinitely extended. Indeed, mid-nineteenth century Americans celebrated their newly inexpensive and swelling postal system as a "bond of union" for the busy, growing, scattered continent. The lawyer, however, imagines Bartleby in that agency of the post office which destroys, not delivers letters. He connects dead letters—acts of help adequate in themselves that die in not reaching their recipients—to the imagined deaths of those who die in unrelieved need, never receiving them. And letters bearing urgent help still speed to death—only in the sequel does the lawyer assume the present tense. The story has not been only a weird episode, but an aspect of life.

Why, then, are calamities unrelieved? Are there not enough banknotes, is there insufficient pardon? Or can we ever know completed acts adequate to the needful existence of another?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morris Dickstein

PARIS LETTER

Paris! In the late fifties and early sixties, when I was coming of age, that word was as magical to me as it had been to the expatriate writers of the twenties. Does it mean as much to many Americans today, when there is little equivalent for the expatriate community that spanned several decades? The old picturesque Paris where the cost of living was low and the creative juices flowed is a thing of the past, the victim of rampant inflation and a brutal process of modernization, gentrification, and wholesale urban renewal. The working-class cafés are gone because the working class is gone, extruded to tacky modern flats in the suburbs. With its population declining and its income level rising, with the cost of housing reaching record heights, Paris has become a cozy enclave for the middle class, a glistening arena of conspicuous consumption. Less affluent members of the bourgeoisie, such as academics and intellectuals, who need to talk to each other, cling to the city for its restaurants, museums, and movie houses, for its energy and excitement. And for foreigners even a spiffed-up Paris remains endlessly fascinating if they can afford it.

Whatever the excitement of Paris today it is certainly not due to a ferment of creative activity. The art in the galleries is dull and derivative, the literary energies seem depleted, and even the cinema, revived somewhat from the doldrums of the seventies, poses no challenge to the early years of the New Wave. Life in Paris is civilized, too civilized; unlike New York, which the French adore, Paris lacks the edge of nervous tension on which artists thrive. For all their anarchic streak, their love of Dada gestures, the French have been living under basically the same conservative government since 1958. They have grown more tight and timid, more obsessed with order and fearful of instability, especially since the missed revolution of 1968, which led directly to a Gaullist landslide at the ballot box.

In this atmosphere the artistic and political cultures have taken on a custodial aura. With a touch of managerial genius, the museums mount wonderful shows that hark back incessantly to the School of Paris between the wars, or to the cubists, or to the impressionists. (This

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

winter it was Pissarro, Derain, and the circle of painters around Apollinaire.) No art movement of the past is too radical to be assimilated into what the Gaullists think of as *la gloire* and what Giscard and his people, with their monarchial airs and civil-service mentality, like to call *le patrimoine*. (Officially, 1980 was *l'année du patrimoine*, a piece of cultural chauvinism that has nothing whatever to do with art.) When de Gaulle addressed Sartre as *cher maître* and refused to let him be jailed for subversive agitation, because even he was "also France," the writer understood that he was being rendered harmless: trussed and stuffed for public display.

French cultural bureaucrats love anniversaries. Last fall they were busily celebrating the centenaries of the death of Flaubert and the birth of Apollinaire, two of their more rebellious and unconventional writers. Less predictably, they soon turned in a smaller way to the death of Dostoevsky and the birth of Musil—notable testimony to the steady decline of French cultural insularity. The Musil exhibition took place at the Beaubourg, a unique institution which, in its first four years, has gone out of its way to contradict all patrimonial and narrowly national assumptions about culture. Its most ambitious shows have been hyphenated ones—Paris-Berlin, Paris-New York—and last year's big winter show, a grand revaluation of realist tendencies in art and literature between 1919 and 1939, seemed designed to undermine the textbook view of the primacy of the School of Paris and its modernist aesthetic. The exhibition was a confused one, with art ranging from Edward Hopper to George Grosz to Nazi propaganda, so that the term realism finally lost all meaning. But it had the provocative abundance and variety that people have come to associate with this irreverent institution.

One thing about the Beaubourg is typically French: its massive scale. It's a big modernist gesture in a city full of medieval, classical, and beaux arts gestures. Otherwise, the building, with its plaza full of jugglers and fire-eaters, its exposed, multicolored heating pipes, and its huge but surprisingly casual crowds, is an odd mixture of Lincoln Center and a sixties "happening." Is there another museum in the world where people feel more relaxed, where books and art and films seem more accessible?

Despite the size of the building, which dwarfs the surrounding landscape—including the chic, renovated Marais and the disastrous sunken shopping center which replaced the markets of Les Halles—the Beaubourg resists the usual French conceptions of monumentality. Before I saw it I knew it only as a building with all of its guts exposed. I had no idea how much this idea of openness and participation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dominated the way it functions—this in a country where grass and gardens are to be looked at rather than walked in, where most public movement except walking in the streets is severely regimented. In comparison to the Beaubourg the Maisons de la Culture in the provinces, so dear to André Malraux, are stuffy and formal redoubts of the middle class.

The Beaubourg draws a much wider range of visitors, including the French themselves, than all the other major tourist attractions of Paris combined. Its glassed-in flow of vertical traffic is already being imitated in the expansion of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Yet the building's flexible, loftlike spaces, with their movable partitions, tend to dominate most of what is exhibited in them, even where horizontal partitions are used to lower the ceilings and create a greater sense of enclosure. Like New York's Guggenheim Museum, the building itself usually overwhelms its contents.

If the Beaubourg were being planned today it would be less likely to become the same free-wheeling, experimental operation. The building was designed by an Englishman and an Italian after an international competition, at a time when the usually xenophobic French were trying to propel their lagging cultural institutions up to world class with an infusion of foreign talent. The astonishing appointment of a German, Rolf Liebermann, to run the Opéra in 1973 was a prime example. But recently both the retiring Liebermann and the departing museum director of the Beaubourg, a Swede, have been succeeded by more dependable French bureaucratic types. (The effect on the Opéra was already noticeable in the thinness of the 1980-81 season.) Yet this cultural chauvinism recurs at a time when French intellectuals—and, indeed, the general public—are becoming less insular than ever. The most audible sign is the widespread knowledge of English, which the government has encouraged for the sake of French business, science, and technology, but which also has proved a boon for American studies in the universities. For decades the French refused to notice that English had replaced French as the international language; now many jobs demand bilingual competence, without which many businesses would be cut off from the world market.

On the intellectual scene the same impulse to keep in the game has made the French much more curious about foreign ideas, largely because there are no powerful new ideas currently being generated in Paris. Not long ago the feeling was: if it didn't happen in France, it didn't happen. But now Marxism, structuralism, and deconstruction have largely lost their hold on French intellectuals, who have rediscovered both history and subjectivity and whose methods have become

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both more eclectic and less assured. Last fall *Critique*, which always had a more international orientation, devoted a whole issue to Anglo-American philosophy, a subject which never before evoked the least interest in Paris. Two eminent but quite traditional American historians, David Brion Davis and Michael Kammen, gave a seminar this year at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Despite their inductive approach it was well-received, though the French would scarcely have sat still for it even five years ago.

France still has its celebrity intellectuals like Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida, but they occupy a much smaller place on the home scene than in the American image of Paris. Deconstruction is very much a back number in Paris just when it is going into orbit as a full-scale academic gig in the United States, cut off entirely from the political and cultural ferment which gave rise to it. When I first arrived I was surprised to encounter Sinologists, Americanists, anthropologists, feminists and others working in a variety of ways largely invisible from the States. This is not merely a problem of who happens to be translated. Tzvetan Todorov, one of the few true structuralist critics, who now claims to have given up literary criticism for historical writing, cited the neo-Tocquevillean social anthropologist Louis Dumont as an example of a stimulating French thinker ignored in America though his major works have long been available in English.

The decline of French Marxism is a subject unto itself because its significance reaches far beyond the intellectual sphere. Structuralism was a methodology but Marxism was a faith: a motive for action as well as a world outlook that linked staid academics, party functionaries, activist students and intellectuals, and substantial numbers of workers and their unions. The decline could be traced to everything from Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech, which was strongly resisted by the French Communist Party, to the disappointments that followed the 1968 uprising, to the writings of Solzhenitsyn and his slick admirers, the so-called New Philosophers, whose work had a disproportionate impact in a country that had never acknowledged certain elementary truths about the Soviet state.

One especially important cause was the renewal of orthodoxy in the Communist Party under Georges Marchais after its brief flirtation with Eurocommunism. Since the P.C.F. deliberately scuttled the Union of the Left in 1978, on the brink of likely victory in the parliamentary elections, the party has lost many of its remaining intellectuals. Others who stayed refused to support Marchais's presidential candidacy this year. With its workers restive, its faithful voters

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clinging strongly to the alliance with the Socialists, and its white-collar and left-wing support eroding, the party shifted this year to a nasty campaign against the concentrations of immigrant workers in the Red Belt suburbs, an appeal to blue-collar prejudice that reminded some observers of George Wallace. After Marchais's support of the conquest of Afghanistan and his virtual blank check to the Soviets for intervention in Poland, this overt racism was the last straw for some party faithful, who had already spent several futile years in internal opposition.

But the eclipse of Marxism extended to intellectuals who had long ago dissociated themselves from the P.C.F. Some of the reasons include: the success story of French society itself, though its prosperity is far from equitably distributed; the appearance of tricky new methodologies, with larger opportunities for self-display; and above all the arrival of Freud as a powerful new force in many academic disciplines. As socialist texts lose influence—and begin to look old-fashioned or utopian—psychoanalytic writings glut the book stalls, but without the monolithic impact of the old Marxist faith. For resourceful French intellectuals, psychoanalysis has become a fashionable way of reinventing the world in new theoretical terms—terms largely severed from therapeutic practice or empirical observation. Yet this self-indulgence, however exasperating it can be to the average intelligent reader, adds to the intellectual variety of the French scene today.

It is no accident that this new interest in the psyche and the unconscious, previously dismissed as reactionary, should spread at a time when bourgeois comforts are in—increasingly available even for the working class—and revolutionary asceticism is out. Hidden in the folds of the new affluence, with its inevitable Americanization, is the old French hedonism. A few years ago Roland Barthes discovered that art gives pleasure—a mystification of the old criticism that did not endear him to his radical students. Yet it was very much a sign of the times, when Pompidou was tearing down a good deal of old Paris, such as the thirteenth arrondissement, to build flats with tile bathrooms and central heating. *Marx est mort,* proclaimed one New Philosopher prematurely, but the consumer society is thriving. The French have embraced technology in a way that would warm the heart of corporate America.

Americans in Paris today are still hooked, but not on quaint narrow streets and cheap, out-of-the-way restaurants, both of which are in short supply. Today's expatriates have money or jobs; they live in a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

city that has been polished to a high sheen, somewhat like a vast outdoor museum, beautiful but a little soulless, where the food and wine are as good as ever and the Métro runs better than ever and the streets are still relatively clean and safe. Administratively, Paris is a great success, an evolving organism but also an elegant showcase of what the city once was.

In the forties when the French were poor the philosophers were writing about *le vide, le néant,* and *l'absurde.* Today the message of Paris is more banal: *malgré tout,* Life Is Good. As philosophy this was already discredited by Voltaire, but it seems to retain its allure in the less theoretical realm of everyday life. It's still a city easy to live in and very hard to leave.

February 1981

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FICTION

Stephen O'Connor

ON THE WING

There was one at first, or maybe two, leaving cloudy white underfeathers on the lake water, while in the kitchen oak leaves lay like copper foil on the counters, or skidded on chance winds which swept the floor.

I believe there were two. In any event, for a time nothing was absent under the clouds, and then it wasn't. There were footprints, like one note and another, making music. A forest of footprints, crossing and recrossing on the sand, which then were washed away, by the small lake waves, by the rain,

leaving stiff brown feathers in the weeds and the sandy lakeside brack. Feathers where the watchdog geese work their bills into the mud, where hot tires hiss along highways that vanish inches below the horizon.

* * *

The onions and potatoes have sprouted. The house waits. The darkness quivers with anticipation. The tired canvas of the lawn furniture sighs. The light from the lakewater leaps through all the western windows. "Wait till you see the view of the lake!"

says Ava as she and Tim speed away from the city in their orange VW. They are speeding to the summer home of Ava's childhood. They are escaping a crisis. Tim sleeps all day Saturday and Sunday. Ava thinks she is pregnant. When they stop for gas she vomits in the woman's room and does not tell Tim. The Canadian geese are gathering at the lakeside.

The stiff black beaks pressing into the mud belong to the geese. First there were two, or maybe one. Inside of a week there were four, in two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weeks, six. Then one disappeared. When Tim and Ava arrive there will be seven.

The man at the service station says, "Do you know that during the Ice Age all of this was covered with ice. That's what they say. Clear to New York. Ice! I find that hard to believe. I don't know if I can believe that!" The man's wife is a big woman whose muscles are as hard as apples. Tim pays her for the gas and a bag of peanuts. She calls Tim and Ava "sweeties" and smiles. Her cheeks are plump as tomatoes. Ava doesn't want any peanuts.

Ava likes to sing with the scratchy choir on the radio. She doesn't like it when he sings, but Tim loves to hear her make a melody with her thin shaky voice. Ava is a rotten driver and the highway vanishes under the car. Angels sing in the darkness. Small pink bushes move through the dim fringe of the headlights and reappear in the red darkness behind. Tim wants to sleep but can't. He braces himself against the dashboard. The car goes off the road.

"Get out of the car!" says Ava. "What?" "You'll see. Get out of the car." Roadside gravel crunches under shoes. There is carbon monoxide in the air and the headlights go off. The door slams and she comes up to him and puts her hands in his pockets and watches the darkness, which had been cupped over the car, expand. The last memory of auto noise is lifted on the thermal air currents with the migrating Redtail and the darkness expands until the eighth heaven (or Stellatum) where it fills with so many stars that the lovers almost fall off the bluff, and then continues to expand until the stars seem as lonely under the immense blackness as Tim and Ava. "And down there, you see, is where we are going." She points to a star in the warm earth constellation.

Just beyond their field of vision a star flashes loose and leaves a slim green welt across the heavens, while in the North Atlantic the boiler of an oil tanker blows a hole amidships, beginning a slow process in which forty-eight men will be lost. Only a mattress, a life jacket and some scraps of lumber will be picked up by rescuers. "It's scary." "I'm cold." "It's not summer any more." And Canadian goose number seven arrives. And shortly, two white globs of cottage wall appear in the headlights. "We're here!" Ava goes into the bathroom and vomits.

Ava is sorry they've arrived after dark. There are barn owls and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

muskrats standing in the shadows, and shivers run all through the house. Even Ava cannot feel the warmth of memories and Tim can't see the view of the lake, but she remembers where the kerosene lamps are kept and quickly the auburn panels remember her. There is her sister at the table! Her father comes in with an armload of wood! Ava wants to make a fire, but Tim wants to go to bed. The man with the axe is coming up from the lake.

"I forgot to tell you, this house is haunted," she says when they have joined their sleeping bags and the light is out. "People from town don't ever come out here because a farmer who lived here murdered fourteen people." "How?" "With an axe." So Tim hears corpses tapping inside the walls and sees grinning axe blades when he closes his eyes and dreams about fourteen people around a conference table having a seminar on cannibalism.

But Ava lets her hands rest on her belly and listens to the footsteps of her father who can't sleep, and shortly before dawn her mother opens the door and blows her a kiss. "Where you are lying is where you were conceived." The door closes and Ava comforts the child beneath her fingers.

In the morning Ava vomits and Tim asks, "Are you sick?" "I've got a stomach virus." But when she sweeps the kitchen she thinks, 'Nesting behavior.' When she throws back the curtains and the sunlight bursts on the floorboards she whispers, "I'll have a boy." When she cuts onions for soup, "A girl." She wraps a black box in red velvet and gives it to her sister who carries it fourteen miles into town and gives it to me.

They cut wood together until their hair and clothes begin to smell like smoke. The silver trunks of the blighted Dutch Elm watch them from the fields. Yellow stalks of unharvested corn hiss on warm breezes and solemn pines descend to the lake where Tim feels his hands become as hard as leather. He astonishes Ava by skipping rocks out to the gray lake middle where a hand reaches up and catches them.

Then they discover the geese, which Tim calls ducks, and chase them down the shore, picking up stiff brown feathers as they fall. They tickle each other while the redfaced farmers ride grunting machinery, bringing produce out of the land, and a polar jetstream unhooks, causing the frigid westerlies to drift southward. In a sudden celebration of Indian Summer Ava throws off her clothes and runs out over the water

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without wetting her feet. When it becomes deep, she dives and surfaces a hundred yards out with a strong dolphin kick in time to see Tim's sleek body surfacing behind her, but when he grabs her he grabs bubbles. From high in the air we watch her strong stroking and her legs streaming behind her. He drifts up bright as a quarter from the green depths and they swim together for a while, feeling how easily their naked bodies slide through the water. They come together while fish stroke indifferently beneath their legs. The next time they come together she wraps her legs around his waist. Her breasts surge up in the water. Their skins are slippery in the cool water. But her vaginal mucus has dissolved, so they come ashore, directly to where we are hiding in the tall grass, and make love in the itchy grass, where his face becomes a swarm of bees and her nipples point to heaven. Two suns meet at the water's edge as we whoop and giggle all the way to our kitchens where our dinners are waiting.

Tim and Ava go to town to buy chains for their bicycles and long underwear for the cold. Summer has gone and fall is sharp as a knife. Tim likes Ava's gooseflesh and how her nipples grow hard as wood-knots. She likes his ribs because when she touches them he laughs. But they are alone in their ancient farmhouse between immense fields of black soil and fields of tiny leaves which hang yellow and quivering. And they are afraid of the brick colored swine which bellow outside the windows, and of the big-toothed country boys who smile at the wheels of their air devouring pick-ups. Late in the night they sit in silence, then leap into each other's arms when a squirrel runs across the roof. And they scare each other in bed with stories about the fourteen axes.

This is Tim in front of a pile of cinderblocks which I am going to build into a wall as high as the tips of my fingers, to keep off polar bears and jackadillos. Ava would like to be in the picture, but she is holding the camera. Now this is Ava when Ava's friend the oboist has come to visit. And the eighth goose joins the strange bulks in the moonlight and Tim marvels at their brave and boring lives.

The oboist has befriended the geese. She serenades them on the beach and invites them into the living room where they are comfortable. The oboist is lonely and she makes a noise like a goose, "Oh no. Oh no." Brown onionskins drift to the floor. She opens the black velvet box and it is red velvet inside and empty. And Ava, who is cutting onions for soup, announces that she will sing a song (Tim is dragging trees through the woods) about love, entitled *Tears, Idle Tears*:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His eyes were sparkling
But my love was a pig
And he loved me more than he did

He gave me more kisses
Than I ever expected
And then he gave me a kid

When I pushed him under the ocean
That's when my love went away

When the sun sank down in the ocean
And it was the end of the day

When the sun went under the water
That's when the water did burn

And now the water has all dried up
And my love will never return

The oboist applauds politely because she does not know what to make, or what is expected, or what to expect. Tim applauds wildly because he understands the secret meaning of the song. He loves Ava's scratchy voice. Ava announces mildly that it is time for soup, which is what the geese are waiting for, and she invites them. Then Ava announces it is time for bed. She kisses her mother and father goodbye, and gives each of her brothers a pack of cigarettes and gives the oboist several hot smooth rocks.

This is the night Ava tells Tim of her pregnancy. Her friend the oboist can hear vowels and occasional fricatives of their conversation coming through the wall. Then the sounds of people getting up and sitting down. Then the hush of limbs crossing limbs and nipples rising and eyes closing. She sees the erubescent moon and hears her own breath bursting as she masturbates in the vibrant darkness.

A glass of water is sparkling on the windowsill. The oboist is very sad. Oh! Oh! OOOOOOOOOOOOOOh. She dips the tip of her oboe into the lake and the curtains fly back of their own accord. The moon does handsprings on the water and taking hold of her oboe draws her down to the beach where the eight geese are waiting for her with their soft bulks and prodding bills. They cover her genitals with goose down and her shoulders with broad wingfeathers. Then as she walks back under the starlight into the city, she meets the Spanish postman and forgets her unhappiness. "I am an apple tree living by the side of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

river," she says. "And the river leapt up to pick one of my fruit." "We are covered in leaves," he replies, "and we are in love." In the morning there are ten geese on the shore. The postman plays the violin.

Tim's work on the wall inspires the curiosity of the neighbors who lay off winterizing to ask him, "What are those things!" "They're airshafts so we can talk to the sky." "You one of those UFO freaks?" "It's going to be an early winter this year." The work refreshes him. A smell of cold, of cut wood, of wet cement. And hands, red and dry, lifting a cinderblock into place. And the wise farm girl with incredible blue eyes, bringing him an apron full of eggs. Ava asks the neighbors in for soup cooked on the new electric range. All through the meal Tim makes eyes at the farm girl and they meet in the moonlight. She cuddles roosters and he buttons his shirt, saying, "Ava and I will shortly be returning to the city."

One day Ava is on the roof piling cinderblocks on the tower and Tim is at the range making soup. He hears a thump and comes out to see a hawk lift Ava from the shingles and sail into the blue storms of approaching winter. From the way she lifts her arms over her head as she is lifted into the air, and the wind shoots through her eyes, Tim knows Ava is in love. Then, while the red farm machinery grunts in the black earth and the telephone wires hum in the wind, Ava is nowhere to be found. While Tim's hands are whiteknuckled on the table edge and ice manacles form on the legs of the geese and ice drifts on the lake like coagulated fat, Ava is nowhere to be found.

Last week that field was green and now yellow stalks lean and rattle. Little towers of frozen dew rise on flimsy stilts above the earth. We search the insect husks on the lake beach, but no Ava. The silver shafts of the naked pines stick lancelike into the the air, wisps of snow scurry quietly on the road before the frenzied headlights of the farm machinery, Tim wanders in the smoky light by the side of the road, but no Ava. And there are feathers in the snow but no footprints, and the geese which arrive from now on die with their feet in the ice. And of the fourteen geese that go south, seven freeze to death in Lexington, Kentucky. The unstuck westerlies ravage North America, bringing glaciers to Texas and ice forests to the windows of Georgia, and frozen snot to the cilia of Tim's nostrils as he unpacks the orange VW in the city, to find Ava making soup on their electric range. . . . No words are exchanged.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oranges in Florida are filled with glittering yellow powder and pussywillows bloom in Fairbanks, Alaska. When the oboist arrives in the spring she meets the baby of Ava and Tim, which has webbed feet, feathers, and eyes the color of egg yolks. Then she joins the postman in Rome, oboe to his cello, and spends hours on the phone.

PRAXIS

Contents of #5: "Art and Ideology," Pt. I (now available)

Materialist Literary Theory in France, 1965-1975 *by Claude Bouché*
"Marks of Weakness": Ideology, Science and Textual Criticism *by James H. Kavanagh*
Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions *by Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar*
Artistic Practice *by Enrique González Rojo*
The School of Althusser and Aesthetic Thought (commentary) *by Stefan Morawski*
Ideology, Production, Text: Pierre Macherey's Materialist Criticism *by Francis Barker*

SHORT REVIEWS

Althusser: Self-Criticism as Non-Criticism *by Mark Poster*
Constructing a Critical Ideology *by James H. Kavanagh*
Class Struggle in Literary Form and Deformation *by Bill Langen*
On Language Requirements *by Tom Conley*
Linguistics and Ideology *by Robert D'Amico*
A Sociology of Texts *by Robert Sayre*

Single copy: $4.50 Subscription (2 issues): U.S. $7.00
Distributed in the U.K., Europe and the Commonwealth by Pluto Press
Praxis, P.O. Box 1280, Santa Monica, California 90406 USA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Michael Malone

HIGH SCHOOL LOSERS

I tell my boy Buster, in the game of life there are winners and losers, and it's hard to switch teams after you run on the field. Buster never appears to be listening, but I feel like I want him to know. My wife Linda tells me Buster's a late bloomer. She tells him he should have known me when I was in high school if he wanted to know the *real* me; he'd be proud. Buster raises his eyebrow and slouches back to his room.

But it's true. I was revved to race back then, I was poured full of the juice of youth. Everything on me bulged. Not a muscle, including the one we called Mr. Roto-rooter, that wasn't flexing of its own accord. It was all I could do to walk down the sidewalks without cramping into a pretzel or exploding like a tire. I was so pumped I had to jog in place; I had the feeling that if I didn't keep all the muscles moving, everything in me would get lockjaw.

My mother would stretch her arms across the door to hold me: "Moochie, listen to me, are you coming to the reunion Saturday or not, are you coming home for supper or not, are you going to ask Mr. Gaddy about a summer job or not?" Oh, she had a life all planned for me, but I sidestepped it. She thought I couldn't hold my horses, and she was right as rain. "Mooch has ants in his pants." But it wasn't ants. I guess you could call it an anteater. With its nose in a constant quiver, that thing had a life all planned for me too, always pointing where it just had to go in a hurry. If I'd had it on a leash, it would have yanked my arm right out of the socket. I spent my time back then trying to get under a barbell or a car, or get a girl under me. I tell Buster, at least I *spent* my time.

Along the way Somebody (and I guess it was God) poured the sands of time all over my motor. I know it was nothing personal. Some people think it was a rotten kind of a joke for Him to play on his own pet creatures—human beings, I mean—to rust them out with age. But I feel I got a good shake and I'm not complaining. Not that I'm claiming I was any special pet of His, but back when I was young He showered some confetti on my head, and I could hear the bands play, and there's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lots of nights I saw the sun come up. There's no doubt I was golden. Look, I was big, white, and living in Hope Valley. I was passing everything in high school with no sweat, and everybody I knew in the world stood up and cheered when I ran out onto the field wearing number 45. Acne skipped right over me. My folks were nice as they could be. I had a big sister who was voted "Girl: Best-Looking" and "Girl: Best All-Around." In the locker room shower Billy Weatherspoon said to me, "Your sister's knockers are driving me ker-aazeee. I'd like to eat them up like two big sundaes with cherries on top." Of course I had to plough Billy in the gut for saying that, but the fact is he was right about Cottie. She was a good-looking girl if I say so myself.

One time I drilled a hole through the back of my closet and I watched her taking a bath. She shaved her legs and under her arms every other day. Maybe watching makes me sound like a pervert, and I guess I'd let Buster have it if I caught him sneaking a peek at Belinda like that, but we're all only human. Dickey Moore *screwed* his sister at the drive-in, and they both turned out okay in the end. The worse I ever did was a hand job while I watched Cottie. She tweezered her nipples.

Our folks were as proud of us as they could be. Cottie was a cheerleader, and I earned four letters. I had three inches of activities listed under my name in the year book. I took for the motto under my senior picture some words of the poet Robert Frost that my mother found for me. They said, "Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length." Believe me, I got some gross remarks scribbled in by my friends about what that quote was supposed to mean: Lacks in length! But we were always horsing around.

I had a '56 Fairlane my Dad got me, a white convertible with red seat covers. I did things in that car you've got to love yourself to do. I'd pass between an Allied van coming south and a Trailways bus going north. I'd drag in the left hand lane right up and over a hill on the by-pass. I'd cut around a string of gutless geezers weaving behind a tractor, and I'd go right up on the shoulder past a half-dozen of them on two wheels, with empties rolling all over the floorboard and a girl slammed against my shoulder giggling at the top of her lungs from holy terror. I guess if I found out Buster tried to pull a stunt like that, I'd ground him for good. But back then it just never crossed my mind that I could die.

I loved that car. The White Knight was its name. I washed it every other day. Lots of guys stuck racing stripes on theirs, or junk like fuzzy dice hung from the mirror, or bumper stickers ("If You Can Read This, Back Off, Buddy"), and Billy Weatherspoon had decals of little blue feet that ran all over his Corvair. But I always kept the White Knight pure. My mother said, "Moochie, if you could keep your room half as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clean as that automobile, I'd rest content." She missed the point. That car was *me*. Nobody stayed in their rooms; at least we felt like nobody but losers did. I was so revved I needed a room on wheels. If I didn't have a girl down to her panties on those red seat covers, I had the White Knight jammed with guys. Back then people had friends. I don't know what's the matter with Buster. I ask him, "Don't you have any friends, where're your friends?" All I get's a slammed door.

Back then we'd order ten Big Boys at Shoney's and wheel out with the waitress chasing us, her tray spilling cokes. We'd flash a few moons in the parking lot at Crabtree mall. We'd shoot the bulbs off the marquee of Guess Road Evangelist Tabernacle. We burned our share of rubber and I guess we raised some hell. But it was harmless. It wasn't the weird sort of stuff. Hating America never crossed my mind. Buster says to me, "How can you like this crummy world?" I say it's the only one I've got. Besides maybe there weren't so many things wrong with it back in my day. He says no, my friends and I just didn't notice. I tell him, damn it Buster, you can't say, "Well, the world's not perfect so I guess I'll give it a pass." It's there, like it or not. Maybe it sounds gung ho or whatever you want to call it, but we liked the world, me and my friends.

The worst thing we ever did was get a little gross and loud, and a little too revved with the cars and the guns. And we took Mandy Kotchkiss out to the golf course one Saturday after the basketball game and made her do oral sex on us all. I guess that sounds a little rough, but she got in the car of her own free will. I don't suppose she thought we were taking her over there to play a few rounds of golf at midnight. I remember she said, "Look here y'all can just forget it, you bunch of damn goons, what do you think I am, a harlot from Charlotte?" And Dickey Moore said, "You said it, honey pie, and I'm a phallus from Dallas." Because everybody in the world knew Mandy'd been going all the way since the ninth grade and she'd already done it with her mouth for Watts Kirkland the night of the Junior Talent Show. So she let us strip her and she did Dickey first.

Back then a sight like her big tits shot up through you like a rocket at Cape Canaveral. So many things did. Your motor was racing and you knew you were alive. And you'd landed in the best country in the world, and lived in Hope Valley! My engine turned over a dozen times a day. To me a girl's body was the best thing God ever made. Feeling the shapes under the tingly sweaters, touching that soft special skin, I was wild from pleasure.

It's not that I was a sex fiend or something; it wasn't just girls that gave me the feeling. I could watch the jets and the wheat fields on the TV sign-off and get a thrill that nearly choked me. The same for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

football, like when you go for two up the middle. The same for the sun popping up out of the waves at the beach, or the first time I saw New York City. Oh, and dancing, I always danced right under the band where I could feel like I'd dived down the throat of a horn and was floating on the melody. The same for the way things like carrots and radishes would pop out of the earth into my hand. All those feelings were as strong as seeing Mandy's moony breasts with the nipples tight as thimbles. I was in a constant quiver of aliveness that would kill me now.

But I'm the first to admit we got way out of hand with Mandy after a while. She cried her head off on the way home. She said, "I hope y'all all have little girls some day and a bunch of animals do something like that to her and see how y'all feel then." Well, I guess I would go crazy if a horrible thing like that happened to Belinda, except Belinda's not the sort of girl that something like that *could* happen to, because she'd never jump into a car with five guys, all of them tighter than Dixie's hatband, and Wilson Hubbard actively throwing up a six-pack all over my back seat, and not think those guys were cruising for whatever they could find. Still there were no hard feelings in the long run. Mandy married Malcolm Bates, and she and my wife Linda play bridge together every now and then.

Linda and I started going together in the twelfth grade. She was a cheerleader and sweet as a dream of Paradise. Just staring into Linda's eyes gave me the same feeling I got from that first look at Mandy's big breasts, except with Linda it was peaceful at the same time because you knew it was a good thing you were doing because you weren't doing anything. Of course, I was in constant pain. Linda sent me back to a stage I thought I'd passed in junior high: we'd French kiss for three straight hours and stop there. I could hardly stand up straight enough to walk her to the door. It was honest to God love. It took me to graduation night to get her bra off.

After I went to State, I found out there were girls who would haul you into the bushes right in front of their dorms. But all I could think about was Linda. The White Knight and I barreled down to Women's College every Friday, or else Linda'd drive up to State with her friends. We'd pet until dawn. She wouldn't let me get inside her, but she got so she loved everything else. I loved her to death. I loved State too. Billy Weatherspoon and Dickey Moore and I pledged K.A. They had a lot of great guys back then, and we raised some hell. I'll say this, we drank our share. God gave me seven big plays my last season, one of them 64 yards running against Duke in the Homecoming. The only problem I had at State was the classes got a little tough. Nothing I couldn't handle, but I had to drop a few courses and bust my wazoo cramming

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to keep the old grade average in the plus column. The teachers at State just weren't as easy on a guy as they were back in high school, and the fact is there were a lot of them that had never even heard of me. I mean surprise, surprise. Like Sinatra says in the song, "That's Life!" You could say it's the course God's teaching us all, and it's no gut. That's what I try to tell Buster. "This world is bigger than you are and you're not going to set it spinning." Christ Almighty couldn't get people to act the way Buster seems to think he's going to be able to—changing the world into Paradise—if he ever makes up his mind to open the door of his room.

Finally Linda got suspended. A bunch of us had gone down to the beach, climbed in through the window of a summer house there with a cooler full of Black Label. Linda and I lay on the porch in the middle of the night, and she let me rub it against her naked. I bet there were a million stars. On the way back, the White Knight got pulled for speeding, so Linda was out way after hours, plus she'd had a little too much beer in the car, and she couldn't keep it down. She threw up all over the sign-in book. She called me long-distance, just in tears. So I said, "Honey-pie, you just forget that old suspension. Hell with all that junk anyhow. We'll go on and get married, how about that?"

Her folks hit the ceiling because they wanted her to finish school, but we went ahead and announced our engagement. Then she let me go all the way. The first time was in my grandfather's barn, pulling the ladder up into the loft after us. I guess it sounds pretty romantic, Linda lying there white as heaven in the sweet crunchy hay, but that's how it happened. I'm not telling anything special, just my life. We did it till we couldn't. When my folks went through the ceiling too, we postponed the wedding until after I graduated. Linda cried her head off, because now we weren't getting married right away, and she'd lost a whole semester, and dropped out of Women's College. Somehow we broke up. I went wild for a while. After they admitted her at Duke, we got back together. It was on Christmas Eve. She gave me a great-looking wallet and a giant stuffed Panda; that bear's probably still down in Belinda's playroom right this minute.

I graduated in 1962, and the next Sunday 250 people came to our wedding and drank ten cases of champagne and five kegs of beer. Everybody said they had the time of their lives. I remember Dickey Moore grabbing the trumpet away from the band and playing Taps on it and our old school C.H.A.R.G.E. when the White Knight peeled off with a string of empties that clattered on asphalt half-way to Fort Lauderdale. Linda totaled the car later on that summer, but by an honest to God miracle she only broke her arm, and kept the baby.

Every now and then Linda claims she wishes she'd gotten to go

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back to Duke that fall term so she could have gotten her degree. But she knows there's nothing she really needs it for, except to hang in the den. I mean she'll never have to go out and work or anything. We do fine.

We had Buster in November, two weeks after I got the news that Billy Weatherspoon'd been killed doing technical advising over there someplace in Vietnam. His mom couldn't say the name of the place. That's why our Buster's name is William Weatherspoon Tryson, instead of Aaron Lionel Tryson III, like Linda wanted at first. Wilson and Dickey and I really tied one on for Billy the night we heard. We got his old Corvair that was still sitting in his parents' garage waiting for him. We drove it out to the Haw River and set it on fire and pushed it in. I don't know what got into us, it just happened.

Our Belinda was born about a year after we built our house in Hope Valley. She was a doll from the day she was born. Maybe it sounds a little gushy, but I love that little girl to death. She's just fine, smart and pretty, class secretary, just sweet as heaven. I don't have to worry about her the way I do about Buster.

I'm in a constant worry about him. Buster's a loner, lives in his room. Who knows what in the world he's doing in there. I know he'd get more exercise if they threw him in jail the way they did most of his heroes, because in jail at least they'd make him do a few sit-ups. I bought him a car, but if I didn't drive it myself on weekends, the damn battery would rust. Buster rides a bicycle and says the combustion engine is as dead as dinosaurs. Worrying about the damn energy crisis never crossed my mind when I was seventeen, and I don't see why my boy ought to throw his youth away on the sad state of the world. Honest to God, he's my own son, and I love him to death, but the fact is, Buster looks like, and talks like, what we used to call a *nerd*. I don't know what they call it now, but my heart just aches because I'm sure whatever it is, it's what they're calling Buster. I ask Belinda, "Honeypie, why doesn't your big brother ever ask a girl out, couldn't you fix him up with one of your friends?" But she says, "Oh Daddy, forget it. He's not interested."

I swear I'm not being hard on him just because he doesn't fit in like I did. It's because I don't believe he's happy. Hell, how could he be, locked up in his room with all the sorrows of the world on his chest, and no friends, not to mention no girl?! Maybe this is going to sound horrible for a father to say, but I almost hope he's at least locked up in there with a magazine, giving himself a little solo action every now and then. I mean I hope Belinda's not telling me Buster's not interested in sex!

Because, if you ask me, sex is what we have to make up for having to die. That's my own opinion. I guess you could call sex God's booby

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prize, and I don't mean that in any sacrilegious way either. Oh, Linda and I don't do it the way we used to. But I'll say this, we had our share. And well, hell, life can't stand still. The game's got to come to an end sometime. And we still love each other, even if (like we joke together) my pectorals and her breasts have both slid a little, like we were those wax candles of a bride and groom on our wedding cake. And our joke is, even if we have burnt down, at least we were lit.

But I don't get anywhere trying to make Buster see my point of view. Like yesterday they showed some clips on TV before the State/Duke game. It was a little thing called "State Football: Highlights from the Past." Well, I figured I might be one of the highlights so I yelled for Linda to go get Buster to turn off those weird singers he listens to all the time and come down and watch. Finally he scuffed into the den and slumped down against the paneling. And sure enough they did show my big run against Duke. There I went, I spun away like the White Knight. Buster got his sarcastic expression while we watched. "Big Moochie Tryson, Jeez-us!" he said.

Then he threw out one of his quotes like always, I don't know where he gets them. He called this one "To An Athlete Dying Young." Live fast and leave a beautiful memory type stuff. And he says, "You should have died right then, Dad, right there in the end zone. Like the Greeks in the stadium used to yell at their Olympic victors, you know, *Die Now Die Now!* See, they were reminding them, you'll never be this perfect again, you only get this kind of moment once. So die now. Right?"

I said, "No thanks, Buster. I'm kind of glad I didn't die then."

Linda said, "Then where would you be, Buster silly billy, if Daddy had died before you were born?"

Buster tore up to his room and came back with a magazine article that claimed to prove it was the losers in high school who went on to great achievements in the world, while the implication was that if you were a sort of big-shot or whatever you want to call it, back then, chances were you'd end up selling used washing machines, while the old high school losers you used to feel sorry for were off being movie stars and inventing a cure for cancer, et cetera. I'm the first to admit setting the world on fire never crossed my mind personally, but if that's what Buster plans to do later on, nothing would please me and Linda more, as long as he was happy. But of course, it's clear as day why this article meant so much to him, because, God help him, if there ever was a high school loser, he's it.

And I guess that's where I think his article was off the track. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact is, back in high school I was Vice President of our class, and now I'm Vice President of our insurance company. I've got two more cars than my folks did, if you want to count things that way, and our house has the only high-dive pool in Hope Valley. I had friends back then, and I've got friends right now. Linda and I don't do the same things we used to, we'd drop dead, but we enjoy ourselves every now and then. So I wouldn't call it completely flunking out.

I knew a lot of losers back then in high school, shut up in their rooms, shut up inside their heads, and they weren't happy then, and I'd be willing to bet Buster my bottom dollar, they aren't happy now. Whether they're sitting on top of the world with a million bucks or not. Because they're still inside the same head, and it's telling that once-upon-a-time loser, "Kiddo, who are you fooling? You're no winner." And so that loser's always got to worry about falling off the world, or getting kicked off, or not really ever having been there at all. I'd be willing to bet.

The fact is, I was a winner, whether Buster thinks so or not. Back then, I was right inside my body without having to think about where I was, the way you don't think about dancing because it's just a fact. Well, I was that kind of a fact. The way I just knew I could make that run, maybe like a racehorse knows. And even if I'm not that outside body anymore, I can enjoy remembering it every now and then. Like a replay.

Replay gunning it with the sound of the old C.H.A.R.G.E. shooting up across the field to me out of the band's gold twinkling horns. And the stadium jammed with colors and friends. Everybody in the world in one cheer swelling over to me out of all the white frosty faces. And replay Linda's face as sweet as heaven in the sweet yellow hay that first time ever.

I was a golden racer in those days and the world was full of gold. Of course, it's like they say, you can't outrace time in the long run. But I wasn't trying to. I just wanted to play the game.

So what I want you to believe, Buster, is I'm not sitting here in this damn recliner, with sixty different kinds of pills I have to get down myself, doing nothing but boo-hooing about how I used to be a big-shot, and where did all the roses go. I'm not down on God for rusting my engine with the tarnish of time. The guy that got those trophies up there on that shelf, got them. Got out of his damn room and went and got them.

Well, it's just like Sinatra says, "I took the blows. And did it My Way." Now, that was a great song.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTS

Henry Lowenfeld

PSYCHOANALYSIS TODAY

There was a time when psychoanalysis was fashionable. Intellectual fashions change like fashions in clothes; the secret of such changes and their powerful influence is one of the least understood psychological phenomena. Today people who try to belong talk about psychoanalysis as old-fashioned, a relic of the nineteenth century. Some characterize it as a "bourgeois science," an unfortunate and simplistic formulation of a complex problem, reminding one of the "bourgeois biology" of Stalinist Marxism. Fashions in clothes are good for business, and most people enjoy their variety, but fashions in political ideologies and in psychology should be understood as problems of mass psychology and be attributed to a deplorable lack of intellectual seriousness. In spite of the abuse psychology receives, the present training in psychiatry all over the United States, as far as it concerns psychological development and psychotherapy, is mainly based on psychoanalytic thinking. The analytic movement itself is very lively; its conventions and the large number of professional magazines devoted to psychoanalysis present a rich scientific life. Knowledge of the child's development and of human psychology has been considerably enriched in the decades since the first of Freud's discoveries. But in spite of this increased knowledge and experience, it is doubtful that therapy is more successful now than it was in earlier decades, as one might have expected.

When one considers the status of psychoanalysis today and compares it to the situation in the era of Freud and his pupils, one sees a tremendous cultural change. Today, in contrast to former times, thousands of people from many levels of society seek help for their psychological problems. In Freud's day the great majority of such people did not think of going to psychiatrists or other psychological

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

healers. Many accepted their fate, others went for advice and comfort to their religious leaders. Only a small number, mostly from the higher and more educated strata of society, went to a psychiatrist or psychoanalyst, and only when they suffered from severe, incapacitating neurotic symptoms. Even today the great majority of people who look for some kind of help do not seek psychoanalysis, but rather some kind of therapy, and for most of these people, psychoanalysis would never have been considered the right choice of treatment for their needs.

There is, of course, a close relationship between neurosis and society. The changes in our society have transformed the pictures of neurosis. One of the fundamental ideas of psychoanalysis has been the inevitable conflict between man's instinctual drives and the demands of civilization. This concept is basic for an understanding of mental health: the conflict has to be tolerated to such a degree that a reasonable level of adaptation is achieved—one is considered healthy if one is able to adjust to the environment without impairment of personality, without suffering too much from the unavoidable daily frustrations of civilization, and if one is able to make use of the possibilities of the surrounding culture for instinctual satisfactions and sublimations and for the development of one's individual character. The evolution of civilization shows ever-changing attempts to find a balance between human drives and the restrictions necessary for social cohesion. Cultural periods differ greatly in the help they offer the individual in reconciling his conflicts with society, in aiding him to find drive satisfaction, mechanisms of defense, and channels for sublimation. The chances of developing a tolerable balance of inner conflicts and at the same time adapting to society's demands are obviously not the same in different epochs.

In 1923, Freud gave us a picture of the interrelationship between neurosis and culture in his paper "A Neurosis of Demoniacal Possession in the Seventeenth Century." The content of this man's neurosis was rooted in the cultural and religious background of his time, the universal belief in God and Satan; religion helped him eventually to overcome his affliction.

Today we know that cultural changes can occur within a very short period. Most conspicuous in the field of psychiatry is the disappearance of certain hysterical cases, those patients whom Charcot demonstrated when Freud visited the Salpêtrière and who are not seen any more (or only very rarely in patients brought up in unusual circumstances). It is seldom pointed out that these very changes in hysteria have confirmed strikingly Breuer's and Freud's idea that the symptoms resulted from repressed sexual desires and experiences. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

general knowledge about the nature of these symptoms, as well as a freer upbringing, led to their disappearance.

Today we have a changed society; therefore, we meet new problems in our patients. But what is perhaps even more important is that the growing child and adolescent have faced a society in the very process of changing, which leads to particular difficulties. Any stable culture, by definition, has achieved a sufficient integration between the conflicting demands of the individual and the environment. It has also developed means of producing the same integration in the next generation, in spite of the inevitable struggle between the generations. Such periods create a certain equilibrium in most people and also, of course, specific neuroses. A changing society confronts the individual with a much harder task.

We still have a great number of patients whose childhood within the family was not much influenced by society outside the family, but they, too, in adolescence meet among their peers in school and college the pressure to conform to the present environment and to the almost irresistible impact of the drug culture. One need only consider the changed life of the college dormitory, where both sexes now live together, to see that young people, whatever their upbringing, face problems not formerly experienced.

To give a brief illustration of such changes: a young girl in treatment some thirty years ago, ashamed that she had lost her virginity in a relationship with a lover who then left her before their planned marriage, married on the rebound. To camouflage the shame and disgrace of lost virginity and out of fear of losing her husband's respect, she managed on her wedding night to produce, with the aid of a safety pin, the expected blood on the sheet. More recently, a young girl in college was so ashamed to be a virgin and so embarrassed before an expected encounter with a young man that she broke her hymen with a shampoo bottle.

Freud's ideas have had a wide influence on society without finding comparable understanding. Thus, psychoanalysis may have helped produce some of these cultural changes without intending them. The causes of these developments are too complex to be explained by psychology alone; but psychoanalysis can help us to understand some important causal factors and certainly interpret effects of the cultural changes on the individual.

Jules Henry, the social scientist and anthropologist, in a brilliant book, *Culture Against Man* (1963), came to the conclusion that in today's society "the psychoanalytic metaphor according to which the child introjects the parent (copies the parent, tries to come up to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

parental expectations) is stood on its head, and the parent copies the child."

The core of the problem we meet today in the general culture and in many neurotic people, both those who come for analytic treatment and those who do not, is the changed role of the father, the unresolved Oedipal complex, and the decline of the superego as a guiding force. It is likely that one of the factors in this development is the weakening of religion. God the Father has gradually lost his power. Even the young people who try desperately to return to religion look for Christ the Son, not for God the Father. Former generations of fathers derived their own strength from God the Father and felt conviction in the standards they enforced in the education of their offspring. And it was easier for the child to bear the demands of a father who himself had to submit to a higher being.

Permissive parents do not realize what a difficult task a child has to accomplish in learning to live in a family and in society, and they give the child very little help. A child is able to adjust to stable rules, like a driver to traffic rules, but not if the parents themselves do not really believe in them or if the rules are constantly changing. Parents influenced and confused by the fashions of the times have abdicated their roles and given up their indispensable function of guiding children. These misunderstood children are treated by many parents as if they were a suppressed minority who had to be liberated. Guidance is considered undemocratic. As a result, the children then form peer groups to help them bear their confusion.

In his time Freud met a strong resistance in common sense, and he tried to convince his colleagues and readers that common sense does not suffice to understand the human psyche. But no one at that time could have foreseen how common sense could be lost entirely and natural parental responses distorted. To illustrate this point: A bright young woman invites her four-year-old boy into the bedroom to witness her sexual performance with different lovers—the child needs honesty and not secrets. Another couple tell their friends proudly how their firstborn five-year-old boy accompanied the father to observe the mother at the delivery of their second child—to be really enlightened about the facts of life. One might be tempted to interpret the behavior of the mother who invites her child to observe her sex life as an exhibitionistic perversion; more likely she truly thinks she is doing what is best for her child. Such parents do not see that children confronted so provocatively with the adult sexual life are stimulated and frightened, feeling all the more their own smallness, weakness, and impotence. The very core of the problem of childhood—that children

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have powerful wishes and fantasies but are not physically able to fulfill them—always vaguely apprehended and clarified by psychoanalysis, is no longer understood by such ideologically constricted parents. What had been a denial of the child's sexuality is replaced by a failure to take it seriously, to grasp the power of instinctual drives, sexual and aggressive.

Society has always understood the latency period as the time when the child, less troubled by drives, is capable of learning in school and family the tools of our civilization, of developing cultural interests and of strengthening the ability to master drives. We now see a less marked latency period in many children, obviously as a result of their different upbringing. Freud pointed out that the latency period is absent in primitive societies and is found only in higher cultures. We now see in many young people a certain primitiveness and vulgarity that might be attributed to the decline of this civilizing period.

In this climate of playful participation in the child's Oedipal drives, the incest taboo is only halfheartedly observed. This impairs the ability to love in adulthood, as the libido is not freed from ambivalent infantile attachments. This inability to love leads necessarily to a regression of the libido and may explain the "narcissistic personality" about which so much is being written these days.

Recently many analysts have become particularly interested in the pregenital drives and their work is contributing a great deal to the study of the narcissistic personality. Others, however, feel that this emphasis on the earliest years can lead to an underestimation of the Oedipus complex, which may still be the most fruitful field for the therapeutic endeavor. The thorough analysis of the Oedipal stage, the uncovering and re-experiencing of important memories from this period and their repetition in the transference make for therapeutic success in the treatment. The attitude of society and parents towards a child's upbringing in his first years has not changed much, but it has changed considerably towards the Oedipal period, so that the regression from this period may be the decisive reason for the increase in narcissism. The cause of this regression lies in the diminishing effectiveness of the father, which confuses the Oedipus complex and impedes its progressive resolution.

In a more stable society, the analyst's main task consisted of interpreting the patient's associations and dreams and helping him to lift his repressions and bring unconscious conflicts into consciousness. Irrational, punishing guilt feelings could be understood as remnants of the forbidden infantile, mostly Oedipal, drives. In this process, the cruel, primitive elements of the superego that conflicted with a mature attitude were eased. The protective and controlling function of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mature superego could be left to the influence of the surrounding culture. In family and society today, many people have grown up with an incomplete development of the superego. As Freud emphasized repeatedly, "the superego is stunted in its strength and growth if the surmounting of the Oedipus complex is only incompletely successful."

Sexual liberation has freed people from many social pressures and restrictions. But it seems that liberation has not led to greater mental health nor has it reconciled the human being with civilization, as was expected; rather, it has led to new neurotic constellations. Today, people complain about their depressed moods and feelings of emptiness, their lack of motivation, their inability to love, their discontent. The term frustration, introduced by Freud, has become a part of colloquial speech. In Paris, as *Time* reported recently, the most popular weekly cartoon strip is *Les Frustrés*.

Freud was of the opinion that frustration is one of the "indispensable conditions" of neurosis. "People," he writes, "fall ill as a result of frustration, of the nonfulfillment of some vital necessity or desire." It is important to understand what causes this general frustration today, as the sexual and economic deprivations of the earlier period have certainly lessened. Frustration no longer produces neurotic symptoms, it seems, only discontent and despair. Freud expressed a certain apprehension when he remarked that neuroses have a biological function as a protective contrivance. When the indiscreet revelations of psychoanalysis make flight into illness difficult, a great number of people may be led to cause disasters worse than their own neurotic illness. The acting out of frustrated affects might explain much violence today and many irrational social upheavals.

Our technical achievements have had many different effects on our lives. We have always had patients whose lives, characters, and pathologies are influenced by an unconscious drive for vengeance, but very rarely did such attitudes lead to acts of violence and murder, whereas today such acts abound. For the analyst who in his daily work sees the sensitivity and vulnerability of the child, there can be no doubt that television, which brings so much violence into the child's life so early, must affect the child's development, dulling the horror of violence and forming minds that see it as part of daily life. These problems, of course, are denied in our society, as their honest recognition might lead to critical questions of freedom of expression.

The general level of discontent may have many causes. It is certainly true that work in industrial society does not provide the individual much satisfaction or pleasure. Freud once wrote that the intention that man should be "happy" does not seem to have been included in the plan of creation. If the development of the Oedipal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

complex is impaired, we often see instead of a normal conscience an unconscious need for punishment.

The balance between the different mental agencies has changed. Simplifying, we may say that formerly a rigid superego restricted the id drives more than many people could bear without developing neurotic symptoms, whereas today, the id weakens the incompletely established superego, which has no support from society. Hence, the integration of the conflicting parts of the personality is shaky.

In treatment, the id-material is less repressed, seemingly less forbidden—"anything goes"—guilt feelings are often denied, and it may take a long time to obtain the repressed reproaches of the superego and to convince patients of its punishing power and of the need for approval of the superego or of the part of it that Freud called the ego ideal. Many people have learned somewhere that the superego is a kind of neurotic symptom that has to be eliminated, a sick remnant of a fortunately overcome, rejected reactionary culture. (As Philip Roth said in an interview about *Portnoy's Complaint*: "There is certainly a personal element in the book, but not until I had got hold of guilt, you see, as a comic idea. . . .")

Patients must be shown, despite a kind of ideological resistance, that the superego is an indispensable part of our psyche and that the superego as well as the id can be frustrated. It is not an easy task to lessen the rigidity of a harsh superego, but it can be done in a successful analytical treatment; it is much more difficult to handle the problems of an incomplete superego. The assumption that all instinctual drives, including the pregenital ones, are of equal value for the adult personality, rather than steps in the sexual evolution toward maturity—and the acting out of them—dilutes in many cases the libidinal energy available for the analytic process. And the acting out of these fantasies is expected in the present cultural climate. Many young people, seduced by the drug culture with its instant gratification, prefer hallucinatory pleasures to the laborious task of exploring their psychological difficulties. They are not interested in reason. With these people, psychoanalysis loses its power.

In many cases, we have to help the patient to find his way in the chaos of his environment. This task is more difficult when the guidelines for life are not transmitted by former generations. Why should an average young person know today how to live? Thus interpretation, the pure gold of analysis, is often not enough; but this sometimes inevitable deviation from classical technique may disturb the analysis of the transference, one of our best tools.

We feel, following Freud, that a therapy has been successful if the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patient is reasonably free from inhibitions and anxieties and is able to work and to love. Society's intrusion often makes it difficult to reach these goals. To give a few illustrations of such problems: A young married woman, brought up in a rather strict environment, seeks analysis because of sexual frigidity. The treatment is successful in the analysis of her Oedipal problems and in curing her of her frigidity. But this healthy release of her drives leads her into an environment where liberation means empty promiscuity and indulgence in drugs. Achieving a mature development of her love life in such a climate is difficult. The analyst cannot think without some concern about the future of this successfully treated young woman.

A man comes for help because he suffers from severe pressure symptoms in his head during sexual relations and is always afraid of getting a stroke during intercourse. His relations with women always end unsatisfactorily. He continually acts out certain infantile fantasies, letting himself be seduced by strong women, the wife or secretary of his boss, or other women in similar situations. In analysis, he gradually understood that he was frightened by his devouring mother and felt he deserved to die in the forbidden love affairs or to turn into the weak, impaired man he had thought his father had been. In the progress of his treatment, the physical symptoms and the fear of a stroke subsided, as he realized that these women were not really his mother—why should he feel guilty? Thus he was cured of his somatic and anxiety symptoms, but the shallowness of his sexual life persisted. The easy victories over parental figures were pleasurable enough so that he was reluctant to give them up. This acting out dilutes the libido, which is needed in analysis to overcome resistances for a thorough working through of the acquired insights. Suggesting a period of sexual abstinence appears simply "old-fashioned" to a present-day patient and almost impossible.

Psychoanalysis has given the inspiration for many branches of psychotherapy. Unfortunately most people find it impossible to distinguish between serious developments in psychotherapy and irresponsible exploitations of human needs. Group therapy, conducted by trained professionals, fulfills a need and seems to help many people; it is another result of the desire for peer groups at the present time. Other psychotherapies—encounter groups, scream therapy, and so on—mostly conducted by self-styled healers, have produced a commercially successful vulgarization of psychology. All such "treatments" exploit (consciously or unconsciously) the "transference" which people in emotional need develop towards a "healer." Any child in trouble turns to a parent, expecting to find comfort, and this expectation is trans-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ferred to any healer who promises help. This standard human response explains the success of these movements. Young people find their needs fulfilled by other methods as well. Cults with strong gurus are more successful in lifting young people out of their empty lives in the drug culture than psychotherapy. Their method is rigid discipline, a life of harsh, ascetic rules and work, infantilization under a strong leader. These grownup children seem to need something they have not received from parents and teachers. Of course, these cults do not result in the mature development of their followers.

Even in the thirties in Europe, some analysts warned that many people expected miracles from psychoanalysis and that the reaction would inevitably be disappointment. In the United States, particularly inclined to optimism, people had hoped that psychiatry and psychoanalysis might be the solution for mankind's problems, a kind of salvation, instead we see disappointment and anger.

Moreover, the damage done to our narcissism by Darwin has been reinforced by psychoanalytic theory which accepts Darwin's finding that we belong to the mammalian species, that our instinctual drives limit our possibilities. We are not born all alike and our constitution and sexual identity are part of our destiny. Many people do not want to accept our obviously biological nature.

Another important line of attack, particularly in Europe, comes from thinkers who accept Freud's concept of the conflict between the individual and society, but who believe that Freud did not go far enough in his critique of civilization. They try to achieve a fusion of Freudian and Marxist concepts. The overthrow of capitalism will free people from repression, a term which here receives an analytical and a political meaning. Only in a noncapitalistic society can the problem of neurosis be solved and an analysis be successful. Most, but not all, of these thinkers are sociologists. Some go so far as to state that a successful analysis has to make the patient into a revolutionary. They do not consider the fact that precapitalistic societies had their own neuroses. In their passion to rescue mankind, these students of Freud and Marx exchange a critical stance, with which they began their studies, for a utopian vision. These hopes and predictions may be as fallible as other Marxist predictions that we heard in Europe before and after Hitler. Assumptions based on analytical knowledge of the human psyche proved more often to be right. Freud's pessimistic remark in 1929, "One wonders, with concern, what the Soviets will do after they have wiped out their bourgeois," was resented by many young analysts. A few years later, this implied prediction was confirmed. In 1919, Paul

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Federn, a close coworker of Freud, wrote a brilliant little paper, "The Fatherless Society," in which he expressed the hope that the departure of the Kaiser and the kings might lead to a government based on the democratic concept of brotherhood, but at the same time, he presciently expressed his fear that the wish for the father would once again destroy attempts to achieve a genuinely free society.

Herbert Marcuse, using the term repression in its political and analytic meaning, has asserted that the larger portion of sexual repression in modern civilization was maintained only in the "service of capitalist domination" and is not needed any more as modern technique replaces hard labor. This idea may throw some light on the reasons for different attitudes toward sexual freedom in different periods. But Marcuse in his later work retracts his implied prediction and sees the present sexual permissiveness as another means of enforcing capitalist domination. It seems that the Marxist concept of the human psyche underestimates its complexity and its inner conflicts.

It is not possible to predict the future of mental health and therapy. The fate of psychoanalysis as therapy depends on the future of our culture, which depends on too many incalculable factors to permit any opinion. We know only that cultural fashions come and go, and that leaves some hope. The climate may change again.

People see the dissolution of the family, the lack of happiness in love, the decline of the schools, the enfeebling drug life, the end of peaceful living in our cities. When Freud wrote in 1929 that "civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration," few people, even his close adherents, gave much weight to this statement. But now people have become frightened. Parents and educators may realize how they have abandoned their children through mistaken ideologies. Parents may rediscover what has always been known and certainly confirmed by psychoanalytic exploration, that children are little savages who need guidance and standards for civilized living and have to develop a reasonable superego for their own functioning, for the integration of different parts of their personality, and for the preservation of social cohesion. A less permissive understanding of the child's sexuality and a better comprehension of the danger of unchecked human drives and of the need for the incest taboo as the root of all firm rules are essential. Above all, parents have to learn again to live the life of grownups according to standards with which children can identify.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jules Olitski

ON DANCE

The ground is essential to dance; dancers move on it, rise from it, and return to it. However, and probably since its beginnings, the relating of dance to ground has not been sufficiently exploited. My guess is that the earliest dancer—the original choreographer—took the shape of the ground into account, and seldom, if ever, chose flat ground. It is possible he (or she) chose in each instance a particular site, which because of its slope, contour, or whatever, lent itself to, even inspired, the expressive movements of the dance, just as it seems the earliest painters chose certain caves which had useful wall surfaces and made use of these surfaces so that an expressive relatedness was maintained between wall and painting.

The direction taken by dance since then (for whatever reasons of convenience and culture) has been toward a flat surface (the use of stage props and decor does not alter the fact). This need not have been so. Flatness of support may or may not be inherent in the nature of painting, but in dance, which moves from the ground, above it, and back on to it and so on, I see no compelling necessity for a *flat* support. Art which moves calls somehow for a more *involved* ground support than art which does not move.

Dance is dependent upon, obviously inconceivable without, ground support. One calls forth the other. An expressive dialogue should come into play, one that seeks climax and resolution. It is a general lack of intimate, *expressive* dialogue betwixt and between floor and dance that I point to. I am reminded, and with delight, by Clement Greenberg, of that scene in an old film where Bill "Bojangles" Robinson does a dance on a staircase. Here was an example of dance and support being expressively inseparable.

It is paradoxical that dance, which has nothing to do with flatness, should seek it. Dance ought not to seek flatness, and I am not speaking now of the flatness of floor, but that of dance itself. Flatness is not of the essence of dance, (as it can be maintained it is of painting); how can it be, when there is *three-dimensional movement*? Nonetheless, unless I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

am quite mistaken, some dances, and that among the best of our time—I think of George Balanchine's choreography of Stravinsky's *Agon* and Jerome Robbins's choreography of Bach's the *Goldberg Variations*—have sought to emulate, at least qualitatively, the "flatness" of modernist painting. And they succeed, to the extent that they do succeed, because of the austere purity and formality of limited movement danced on a two-dimensional support—a kind of dance equivalent to the "stillness" of Picasso's synthetic cubism. Presumptuous as it is—and it is—I am saying dance can be more if it exploits the ground upon which it moves, and *makes the ground more one with itself.*

Where is it written that the dance floor must be flat? *Where* the *necessity*? I suggest there are potentialities for dance stemming from the very nature of dance and only waiting to be made significant when choreographer and dancer examine the literal ground on which they stand. It ought to be apparent, for example, that if a dancer does not *always* descend to the same level from which he has ascended, that opens visual as well as movement possibilities to the way three-dimensional forms move in relation to the space and support around them.

It is in *relation* to the floor as well as to space that dance arises, moves, descends, and so on. I think choreography might take this notion into account: before there can be a dance, there ought to be a floor—a floor containing more than one level—that relates to the dance. Why not have the inner reality of the dance—its syntax, so to speak—be inspired by the floor itself? Such a multi-leveled floor would be in a more immediate and involved relation to the dancer's movement in space (and the dancer to it) than the usual two dimensional floor. What I am suggesting is that (at least for *pure* dance), first a floor be conceived and *then* the choreography envisioned in relation to that floor.

It could work the other way as well: the choreographer envisions a dance and then designs a floor unique to that dance.

All I'm suggesting is that since the floor is inseparable from the dance, more can be *developed* from this relationship than there has been (to my knowledge at any rate).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POEMS

Anne Waldman

TRAINS & CLOUDS

We have just arrived in Dimitrograd
Is it named after Georgi Dimitrov, statesman & prime
minister until 1949?
There certainly are a lot of officials lurking about
I've misplaced my passport & they're eyeballing me
The train is like an ambassador
getting a chilly reception, while the sun flights through steely
clouds

I was reading Graham Greene's *Stamboul Train*, you were
gazing at clouds
I had no idea we'd be stopping in Dimitrograd
I like the name, sounds like demi-god. When I was a
kid I wanted to be an ambassador
What were you doing in 1949?
Just being born? They were probably going about spoiling me
But I have no idea what this uniformed gent is talking about

"Pardon, mais je ne parle pas cette langue, monsieur,"
I was about
to say, but suddenly something backfired and clouds
of smoke billowed in through the compartment window
& he leapt out leaving me
free of worry over having no identity in Dimitrograd
I wonder if things were much different here in 1949
Of course! Decadence & elegance at the station at
least & the war made the ambassador

nervous, you can be sure it wasn't like being a
glamourous ambassador
with expense account you read about
No no things were bleakly winding down in 1949

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I love to travel. I get dreamy like I'm living on a
cloud
although this train isn't what it used to be just as
Dimitrograd
isn't. Furs & caviar & horse-drawn carriages waiting on me . . .

Silly! It was probably just a little peasant village
If you ask me
you'd have made an ambagious ambassador
trying to cheat poor communist Dimitrograd
making small talk & sneaky deals & gadding about
pretending you're a Brooklyn ward healer while storm
clouds
of cold war brewed & you were summoned back to
Washington, abruptly reprimanded, this is 1978
not 1949

And I'm relieved it's not 1949
We'd be in a lot of hot water you & I
attempting to reach Istanbul through clouds
of intrigue, unmarried, posing as ambassadors
Graham Greene has something in here about
a dubious woman. O darling, the train's starting
up we're about to leave our beloved Dimitrograd

Dimitrograd we hardly knew you! We were babes in 1949
& me I'm dumb about history I'd have flunked out of
Ambassador School. But I love exotic trains & clouds.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brian Swann

AUBADE FOR AUTUMN

Light comes put-putting in like an
old bi-plane. *Start again.* This

Morning arrives almost before light
itself. *Not bad. Again.* This morning is

A sonata. *Better.* Telemann. In G
minor. *Good.* Organ is adagios of

Bronze and red cascading from oak and
maple. Trumpet the quick fingers

Of aspen, and the slant eastern
light swarming down the dry stream-bed

Like trail-bikes, two or even three
up, buzzsaws gone loco—. *Again.*

Trumpet is light embedding itself
inside the still green foliage

Of young elms, whose leaves make
lenses. The silver echoes are drowned

Out by damn dapple-dawn-drawn
Hondas. Oh, pride, plume, here

Buckle! AND—. *Slow down.* O,—Pp! *Legato! Start again! Da capo!*—my.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gilbert Sorrentino

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF OILCLOTH

Three young women in white dresses
At the edge of what may be a lake
And the song that issues from the vicinity
Slides across the water and has no meaning
Whatsoever. Their faces are very jolly
And one imagines them smiling as one smiles
Himself as the song is recognized. Are cheaper.
Tomatoes are cheaper. To fall in love.
Tomatoes are. Now the famous fog and mist
Borrowed from a stack of bad novels bought cheap
Covers them. Covers all. Night covers all.
Wending home. Cheap tomatoes. In love at last
With a trio of closely shaven gentlemen
In plus fours and lots of air in their heads.
It's all better than religion sweetheart
Sweetheart sweetheart will you?
We are entering the stretch of this entire
Dippy carnival. They're climbing the slope
Into the darkness of the trees. White. White. White.
A chiming laughter. No bananas today. Tomatoes in love.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Judith Yamamoto

A SMALL TENT

I take my umbrella
a small tent in the sand;
I can watch the children against the yellow waves,
the bees over the kelp tracking in a high whine

the war ships are steering that familiar course
in southern waters
at dawn the flying fish see the grey hulls;
even I'm not fooled any more,
I know that the eyes of those corpses
will gleam in the seaweed

and on any dim coast, a thunder of crows—
always the hecklers, lamenting and reminding

now for awhile I sit in my shade;
I can watch the mapmakers drawing new boundaries,
coloring the seas;
listen to these children inventing fathers—
one boy says, mine will be a thorny tree

if the sides of my tent expand
the children will come inside,
their small fingers dragging blankets;
I can dig a firepit,
I can heat the cocoa;

I can watch the veins rising at my knuckles,
those blue journeys to the heart

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

THE FLOWERING OF VIENNA

FIN-DE-SIÈCLE VIENNA: POLITICS AND CULTURE. By Carl E. Schorske. Alfred A. Knopf. $15.95

In this day of glib journalism and potboiler history it is refreshing to find an author who makes the highest demands on himself and who has respect for his readers. Carl Schorske presents the distillation of over two decades of engagement with late nineteenth century Austrian culture in an intellectually brilliant, stylistically scintillating, and historically profound series of interrelated essays that explore the art, philosophy, architecture, music, and psychology of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Schorske gives us a book to be delighted in, savored, studied, returned to and treasured. The text may be closely correlated to the sumptuous color plates and illustrations that it explicates and socially contextualizes. The comparisons Schorske draws are richly informed, ranging from Aeschylus to Yeats and from Beethoven to Schoenberg.

Some periods of history, like imperial Rome and Bismarckian Germany, are recalled for their achievements in politics and statecraft; others, like Periclean Athens and Renaissance Italy, are memorable for their intellectual flowering and cultural creativity. The closing years of the nineteenth century in the capital of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was such a fecund, culturally creative period. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* has given us a cultural storehouse of exploration and reshaping of our concepts of ourselves and the world which we still draw upon as our reservoir of ideas of self and social meaning. The period and locus Schorske has chosen are ones, where the aesthetics and thought of our time were forged in the fires of nationalist passion, political turmoil, and social dislocation. His achievement has been to intermesh these two levels of historical understanding—the political and the cultural—and to make each reverberate with the other by showing influences, syncretisms, and discordances between various sectors of the society.

A demonstration of Schorske's virtuosity as a social historian of culture is his analysis of the two rival conceptions of the planning of Vienna's Ringstrasse. This boulevard of monumental public buildings and apartment houses is separated by parks and open spaces on the circular swath of land where the city's fortifications were torn down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Schorske structures his analysis as a dialectic between the social values and class origins of two architectural world views and their protagonists. Camillo Sitte favored a medieval scheme of city layout that included irregular streets and plazas, with intimate forums and marketplaces. He espoused the comfortable enclosed spaces and squares that gave visual expression to an ideal of community. He was a member of an ascendant artisan family that cherished the values of preindustrial society. He wrote of the principal squares of the city that they should appear "for the pride and joy of the inhabitants, the awakening of a sense of belonging. . . . That's how it was in the old cities."

Sitte's rival, the architect-planner Otto Wagner, championed the primacy of the functional and the technical in urban design. Wagner's rational planning made governing principles of economic necessity, traffic, and hygiene. There was nothing of the romantic in Wagner's ideas. He came from an ascendant bureaucratic family which espoused entrepreneurial values. His career was capped by appointment to Professor of Architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts, where he championed a utility-oriented concept of urban architecture which won the day at the Ringstrasse. However, Schorske shows how within the functional plan of the thoroughfare the pretensions and styles of the past were maintained in a classic parliament building, a Gothic church, a baroque opera house and theater, and Renaissance facades on apartment houses. The past and the future were in a compromise of stone and concrete in Vienna's great avenue and the public buildings which lined it.

In an intriguing triadic essay on Vienna's political leadership, Schorske defines the nature of the new politics of the twentieth century. What had been a liberal-dominated polity in Austria, in the mid-nineties became the arena of new mass-movements led by charismatic demagogues who mobilized the emotions of their followers in the service of ideology. The "new key" in politics was no longer a politics of reason, rather it was a politics of passion based on the force of popular appeal, symbol manipulation, and the imagery of unconscious longings. The new leaders whom Schorske discusses were Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism; Karl Lueger, of the Christian Social movement; and George von Schoenerer, the German National leader. They understood the secret of modern electoral power: that politics is not a rational enterprise, rather its core is emotional mobilization of masses around half comprehended anxieties, images, and symbols.

Schorske has written a distinguished study of German Social

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Democracy—perhaps the best historical study of a political party that has ever been written. Thus, it is all the more remarkable that he did not include Dr. Victor Adler, the founder of Austrian Social Democracy, among the galaxy of leaders he analyzed. Adler, as Schorske's student William McGrath has shown (*Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria,* 1974), used the public processions and rituals of a Roman Catholic culture to build a socialist labor movement, and a Christian appeal to a "day of rest" rather than a Marxist call for a strike to establish the first May Day holiday. Adler crafted a psychology of politics blending pagan ritual, nationalist allegory, and public procession to press his campaigns for equal suffrage and an eight-hour day. But it is unfair to fault the author for what he chose not to include in his book. For, the historical material is infinite and there is nothing in the cases he chose to exclude which invalidates his theses; rather, as in the case of Adler, the theses are stronger and more encompassing than the focus of his evidence, and what may be added is consistent with Schorske's synthesis.

The Interpretation of Dreams is the primary text of psychoanalysis. It stands magisterially as the explication of the psychoanalytic method of dream analysis and as the internal autobiography of a major figure of modern culture. The primary material is Sigmund Freud's own dreams and associations—his inner life, conflicts, and identity. Thus, notwithstanding his prudence (at a given point he stopped his associations, saying to those for whom it was not enough, "Let them tell more!"), we know more about the life and mind of Freud than about any other person who ever lived. The unfolding "plot" of Freud's *Traumdeutung* is also a complex literary structure which Schorske analyzes on the models of Augustine, Dante, and Rousseau.

Schorske proceeds adroitly to exhume and structure the social and political contexts of Freud's creativity of which Freud was not only unconscious, but which he, not being a cultural historian whose work is informed by a Marxist sensibility, could not even have conceptualized. Schorske is no vulgar Marxist. What he has taken from Marx is a keen sense of class socialization: how social origin and situation—aristocrat, landlord, bourgeois, artisan, worker, or peasant—condition the world view, tensions, and aspirations of their bearers.

The Freud that Schorske gives us is an assimilated son of a lower middle-class, religiously observant Jewish merchant family from Moravia. He is upwardly mobile in the professional world of Vienna and solidly identified with the fortunes and aspirations of Austrian liberal-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism. Freud moved in a socio-cultural setting of liberal Jews, ambitious young professional and business men who had lost the political field to the anti-Semitic Christian Socialists and German Nationals. They had also lost the hope of comprehending or holding in check the forces of popular emotion and unreason that marked the politics of the Central European future.

Schorske's contribution to Freudian scholarship is his development of the latent political context behind Freud's dreams. The traditional psychoanalytic posture regards political and social "causes" of neuroses as defenses against more personal and immediate intrapsychic conflicts that are unconscious and therefore have a higher order of significance and greater explanatory power. Psychoanalysts know from their every day experience that patients often find every external reason for their unhappiness: economic, political, sexual, societal, the mendacity and ill will of others, the ineptitude of parents and caretakers. It conventionally takes years of joint labor by analysand and analyst to work through these manifest "resistances" and come to the "deeper," personal meanings of behavior, responses, and fantasies. Schorske's *tour de force* is to invert this classic layering of "manifest" and "latent." He demonstrates that hidden behind Freud's courageous self-revelation of sexual, competitive, incestuous, and murderous wishes which he painfully brought to consciousness, lies the unexposed socio-political world of a Viennese bourgeois liberal at bay before the forces of mass politics.

With this book Schorske has brought to a new level of accomplishment an integral method of socio-cultural history. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* will be a model of how such history is to be researched and written. What precisely is Schorske's method? It is exploration of the themes, motifs, and salient features of the manifold cultural, biographical, and socio-political structures of an epoch. His approach intensively explores literature, music, art, architecture, philosophy, and psychology in the particular historical situation of the last days of the Hapsburg Empire, presenting a broad range of topics that reinforce and interrelate with each other in the flow of time. His method and his style are dialectical—always bringing out what is negated, what is not happening, and what is being responded to in a position or event. Schorske is master of the nuances of social and economic class origins and aspirations, factors that are essentially "Marxist" in method and which are all too often applied in a crude reductionist manner. In Schorske's hands the subtleties of class hopes and frustrations are related with consummate craftsmanship to values, ideologies, aesthetic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expression, and changes in every constellation with the passage of time. Metaphors from politics, music, literature, and psychology are interwoven in a rich tapestry of evocative images which illuminate and complement each other. Schorske's structures run from humanistic vision back to social reality as well as from the marketplace to ideology and culture.

In two essays on the artists Gustav Klimt and Oscar Kokoschka, Schorske explores the interlocking web of influences of Viennese aesthetic and political life. Klimt moved in social circles in which Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche were admired. His work and that of Gustav Mahler were inspired by Nietzschean visions of Zarathustra's priestess and heroic poetess. The crisis of Klimt's life came over his three ceiling paintings for the aula of the University of Vienna executed from 1898 to 1904. He designed murals representing the three faculties—Philosophy, Medicine, and Jurisprudence. According to the charge of the university, the paintings were to portray "The triumph of light over darkness"—a vision in the best Enlightenment tradition. Instead Klimt presented to the university a visual statement of man's helplessness before the forces of unreason. Humans were pictured as passive victims of indomitable fate. In "Philosophy" there was no order, only chaos. In "Medicine" death was central to the river of life and there was no surcease of pain. Nor did man find justice from "Jurisprudence," only torment. Klimt portrayed the Law as ruthless punishment, consuming its impotent, bowed victims. Law had not mastered violence and cruelty, but merely legitimized it. In Klimt's focal scene the male victim is passive, depressed, bent and defeated, caught in a carnal trap by a womb-shaped octopus which enfolds him. Gorgon-like females with thick, snaky black swirls of hair are his tormentors and judges. "The punishment," writes Schorske, "is sexualized, psychologized as an erotic nightmare in a clammy hell." Klimt, as did Freud during the same years, shifted "from public ethos to private pathos." In his painting which was to have celebrated "the victory of light over darkness," he instead exposed the primal savagery that underlay the pretenses of justice.

Where Schorske has earlier detailed the intricate "cultural-political convergence" in many Viennese aesthetic spheres, he now approaches his main thesis about Klimt, which is but a part and a demonstration of his general thesis on *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture: there was a new visual language in response to the trauma of attack and public rejection. Klimt created an art of anger and allegorized aggression. Schorske connects Klimt's vehement rage at frustrating social

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authority to what he has defined as Freud's "counterpolitical spirit," which dealt with political conflict and defeat by psychologizing it and placing the locus of conflict in the mind rather than in the social world.

The ceiling paintings initiated a political struggle in Vienna over the function of modern art. The issue of *Ver Sacrum* containing Klimt's drawings of "Medicine" was ordered confiscated as an "offense against public morals." The painter was inaccurately identified as a Jew. The Ministry refused to confirm his election to a Professorship in the Academy of Fine Arts and refused to allow "Jurisprudence" to be the central work of the Austrian exhibit at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition. Says Schorske: "When political issues become cultural, cultural issues become political." It is in examining what he terms "the cultural-political convergence" that Schorske is most skilled as a historical craftsman. He delineates the conflict by analyzing the positions of the four protagonists: Klimt himself; Professor Friedrich Jodl, a liberal philosopher who led the fight against Klimt; the art historian Franz Wickoff, who championed modern art; and the Minister of Culture, Wilhelm von Hartel, who administered the university; against the changing work of the artist as the controversy over the paintings raged. After Klimt did his third and final painting, "Jurisprudence," in 1901, he developed a separation of politics from art. Klimt retreated from public forums of artistic expression to paint the portraits of elegant women in the private sphere of the wealthy Jewish families of Vienna. His art moved from organic dynamism to static ornamentalism. Abstraction and transcendence now replaced external reality and engagement. Thus Schorske demonstrates with the case of Klimt his thesis of aesthetic retreat by the *avant-garde* in turn of the century Vienna.

Schorske's sensitive evocation of mutual socio-aesthetic interaction is demonstrated in the discussion of the changing role of art in Austrian society from 1860 to 1890. Using the writers Adalbert Stifter and Hugo von Hofmannsthal as his case studies, Schorske shows how the function of art moved from expressing ideals for society and serving as a personal adornment, to becoming an integral way of life. The fathers who achieved economic success in the mid-century reared their children to absorb high culture as a good in itself and as a style of life. In Vienna last week's performances at the opera, the philharmonic, or the Burgtheater provided the topics of polite conversation. The children of the *haute bourgeoisie* of Vienna were reared in the concert

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

halls, theaters, museums, and in the literary clubs of the gymnasia, creating by 1890 an aesthetically cultivated, well-to-do middle class whose personal refinement, theatrical and musical culture, and psychological sensitivity were not, as elsewhere in Europe, a protest against bourgeois civilization, but rather an expression of that civilization. But the aestheticism lacked both ethical or social ideals: it was a mode of life.

The next generation of expressionists, represented by Oskar Kokoschka and Arnold Schoenberg, proclaimed disturbing psychological truths which the first generation had only alluded to in allegory. The shock of their explicit work produced rejection, which in turn reinforced their alienation. This alienation became the ground on which they explored new artistic and social realms. Schorske, in giving us *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna,* has established a new standard of social breadth in intellectual history and added a novel and welcome cultural dimension to political history.

PETER LOEWENBERG

LIONEL TRILLING

LIONEL TRILLING: CRITICISM AND POLITICS. By William M. Chace. Stanford University Press. $12.95.

William Chace's study of Lionel Trilling is the work of a young man who is not Jewish and not from New York and who "was born exactly one year before the German invasion of Poland." For Mr. Chace Stalin "is . . . a name, not an experience," and he scrupulously warns us that he does "not know at first hand many aspects of the modern experience of ideological conflict." My own perspective is precisely the opposite. I am Jewish and from New York. Both World War II and Stalin were more than names for me, they were experiences. Despite the difference in perspective, I find Chace's portrait of Trilling's mind both recognizable and congenial. Chace has none of the sixties rage against the weakness of the liberal imagination, nor is there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that passionate revulsion from the experience of Stalinism that can create another kind of distortion. His view has the disadvantages as well as the advantages of distance, but his study succeeds in touching upon most of the important issues in Trilling's work in a way that enables the reader to advance and complicate the discussion.

The first three chapters of the book attempt to place Trilling in his historical context, particularly in his relation to politics and his Jewish identity. I will return to them later, but I want to begin by addressing myself to Chace's first consideration of a major work by Trilling, the novel *The Middle of the Journey* (1947), published eight years after the book on Matthew Arnold.

The political center of the novel is the liberals' experience of Stalinism in the thirties and forties. Trilling was not alone among his contemporaries in his repudiation of Stalinism, but he had perhaps a deeper understanding of the problematic character of alternatives to the Stalinist temptation (it was not called Stalinism by fellow traveling liberals until the Khruschev Report of 1956) than his contemporaries. Against the two absolutisms in *The Middle of the Journey*, one incarnated by the passionate commitment to communism (i.e., Stalinism) of Nancy Crooms and the other by the fanatical, though deeply meditated Christianized anticommunism of Gifford Maxim, Trilling posed the liberal sensibility of John Laskell. Trilling demystified the anger of the two fanatics in a way which clearly suggests the superiority of the liberal idea. "It was the anger of the masked will at the appearance of an idea in modulation." But the burden of the novel strongly qualifies the sense of superiority, for if the liberal resists ideologizing his anticommunism (not wanting to become a distorted mirror image of his adversary) he remains insufficient in character and doctrine. Chace acutely, if not with entire accuracy, notes Trilling's modulated response to "the idea in modulation":

> The "liberalism" of this novel, then, is at best a piety. Precariously maintained, and made uneasy in the presence of another force that mixes intelligence, aggressiveness, and a strange honor in shrewd proportions, it exists only to be threatened. It finds its solace in reflection upon death, and with death in mind it judges the effusions of political passion stridently surrounding it. Trilling's loyalty to such liberalism is odd and diffident. Perhaps the nature of that loyalty is one sign of the malaise and discomforts of political engagement in the 1940's in the United States. That so important a university intellectual in that "haunted" postwar time could put forward as a protagonist such a figure as John Laskell, and yet offer him such frail support in his contests of mind and will, reveals that even the more skeptical forms of liberalism had been placed under great stress. Liberalism in that time was provisional and wary.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The liberalism is not a piety, but an anxiety, a necessarily inadequate response to the twin temptations of Stalinism and ideological anticommunism. To see why the response is necessarily inadequate (and the source of anxiety) one would have to understand the choices felt to be available at the time. What Chace omits in his account (a consequence of his distance from the time) is the spectre of Nazism. The very force of Nazism had made liberalism, even in the eyes of the liberals, seem insufficient. Communism (or at least fellow-traveling) was the alternative forced upon liberals, because it had—or seemed to have—the capacity to meet force with force. Such an alternative, of course, entailed the suppression or repression of knowledge of the Soviet labor camps and of the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact. But the bad faith of liberals who were utterly without the idea in modulation does not evaporate the overwhelming fact of the threat of Nazism. Nor is bad faith the whole story of fellow-traveling liberal antifascism in the thirties. George Orwell's unillusioned witnessing of the Spanish Civil War (as recorded in *Homage to Catalonia*) did not destroy his conviction that he was on the right side and that he was in the company of many gifted and courageous men who were willing to sacrifice and indeed sacrificed their lives for a worthy cause.

It is an odd but significant fact of Chace's study (which covers a period of fifty years from the mid-twenties to the mid-seventies) itself perhaps a symptom of the American intellectual history that he is recording that there is scarcely a reference to the experience of Nazism. It almost seems as if American intellectuals had been deflected by Stalinism from contemplating the enormities of Nazism. One cannot imagine a comparable study of a European intellectual with such a conspicuous absence. One must turn to a European intellectual, Hannah Arendt, (a refugee from Nazism) in order to see Stalinism in a perspective which includes the phenomenon of Nazism. One of Hannah Arendt's achievements (particularly in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*) is in her powerful demonstration that rather than alternative phenomena, Stalinism and Nazism were part of a single historical and ideological continuum. (Outside the community of New York intellectuals, this view was promulgated by conservative thinkers with a libertarian bias like Peter Viereck and Frederich von Hayek.) The recent spate of books about the Holocaust may be viewed as a retroactive attempt to compensate for the earlier scanting of the Nazi past; for the Holocaust, after all, is the supreme expression of the working of the Nazi system.

American intellectuals, at a distance from the war, did not have the either/or experience of European intellectuals. They could afford the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

luxury of "an idea in modulation." In *The Middle of the Journey*, the liberal Laskell is seen by the impressive Maxim as the last of a dying breed, even complicit in its own extinction. ("The supreme act of the humanistic critical intelligence—it perceives the cogency of the argument and acquiesces in the fact of its own extinction.") But the death sentence has turned out to be premature. "The idea in modulation" helped spare American intellectuals as a class from the insidiousness of Stalinism. It took the sophisticated left-wing Europeans much longer to learn the lesson, and it is a question whether they have fully learned it yet.

What is the source of "the idea in modulation" in *The Middle of the Journey*? Chace accurately notes that "the novel turns, in its complexity, upon death. Death imitates, conditions and gives character to all of its main events. The people in the novel approach death in many different ways, and in their encounter with it invite understanding of their selves. Death delineates and judges them. Thus it stands central to everything, subsuming politics as it subsumes all other phenomena, but doing so with suppleness and never with the morbidity one might imagine it possessing."

Trilling saw a certain kind of political aspiration, having its provenance in the Enlightenment and finding its contemporary apotheosis in Stalinist "radicalism" as an attempt to deny the conditioned character of existence (our finitude, our mortality) in a dream, or worse, a doctrine of utopian fulfillment. It is not hard to choose the side of wisdom if the polarities are finitude and infinity, mortality and immortality. In a century wracked and disgraced by political absolutisms that have arrogated the religious dream of infinite possibility and immortality, the view of man as conditioned is a noble view. The trouble arises when the polarities exclude alternatives. Death may be a premature perspective. The young grow old and die, but they are not only entitled to the illusion that they will live forever, such an illusion may inspire the will to produce, to achieve, even to transcend. Indeed it is precisely the encounter, the conflict between the will to achieve (and even transcend) on the one side, and the limiting, thwarting conditions of existence on the other, that makes for the sense of tragedy. If one must surrender to conditions (as one inevitably must), the test of heroism, of courage is in the capacity one has to persist against those conditions and the grace with which one finally submits to them.

This perspective on the youthful radical dream of transcendence should not, however, be conflated with Stalinism—though youthful radicalism, persisting unmodified in old age, may systematize and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bureaucratize itself into Stalinism. Trilling never conflated Stalinism with radicalism. His commitment to "the idea in modulation" left open the possibility of other kinds of radicalism for people with temperaments different from his own to follow. Nevertheless, I sometimes find wanting in his work a sharper discrimination between a possible radicalism and an absolute radicalism, which denies conditions. Death tends to cast a premature shadow.

All of the changes in Trilling's intellectual career can be viewed, I think, as the tracings of "an idea in modulation." Trilling had his heroes and even his causes, but I think it a mistake simply to see Freud or Arnold in the background of the mutations of his thinking about political and cultural situations. It was an aspect of Trilling's genius that he could turn on ideas and commitments that he had long cherished, when he found them a threat to what he felt to be the health of self and society. Mind, art, and the idea of culture itself are not exempt from an often penetrating skeptical scrutiny. It has scarcely been remarked how far Trilling traveled from an Arnoldian view of culture in his later career, however much he continued to admire Arnold's spirit and sensibility. No one knew better than Trilling that Culture could no longer be counted on to supply a fresh stream of thought to our stock habits of thought and feeling.

In the concluding essay in *Beyond Culture*, "The Two Environments: Reflections on the Study of English," Trilling asks "whether in our culture the study of literature is any longer a suitable means for developing and refining the intelligence." It should be noted that Trilling asks the question (in a manner characteristic of a mind in modulation), leaving open the possibility of dialogue and debate. Chace engages the question by challenging the attempt to go beyond culture and literature "as hazardous and dubious as was his earlier one to find a politics appropriate to the antinomian, adversarial, and deathly aspects of the culture he fears," but he does not say why, apart from challenging Trilling's effort to find support in Keats's apparent preference for philosophy over poetry ("for the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as truth"). "Hazardous and dubious" aborts our understanding of Trilling's brave attempt to think through our cultural situation. By literature Trilling means something quite different from Arnold's secular scripture, he means "the antinomian, adversarial literature" that richest expression of the modern creative mind, which diffuses itself, for instance, in our recent counterculture. Literature as secular scripture never lost its value for Trilling, but he was acutely sensitive to its weakness as an antidote to mass culture. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beyond Culture Trilling turns to biological instinct, which as Freud has taught him "proposes to us that culture is not all powerful. It suggests that there is a residue of human quality beyond the reach of cultural control." Whether Trilling is right in his reading of Freud (Chace thinks not), whether biology actually provides the kind of resistance that Trilling wishes to attribute to it I am not prepared to say. What interests me is the strategy of dramatizing the inadequacy of the usual resort to cultural values.

Like any political absolutism, culture itself can become an expression of the aggressive will. Trilling characteristically recoils from every imperializing manifestation of the will, whether it takes the form of politics or intellect or creative imagination. What attracts him to "biological instinct" (be it myth or actuality) is its resistance to the will to dominate. It is important to keep this aspect of Trilling's thought in mind, because it provides a qualification, if not a corrective to the persuasive view (first put forward by Joseph Frank in his brilliant review of *The Opposing Self*) that his long-standing antipathy to the will leads Trilling "to endow social passivity and quietism *as such* with the halo of aesthetic transcendence." There are moments in Trilling's work which invite this kind of judgment, but I believe with Chace that they betray his best intention. Chace aptly cites a passage from Trilling's essay on Edith Wharton. "The morality of inertia, of the dull, unthinking round of duties, may, and often does, yield the immorality of inertia. . . . No: the morality of inertia is not to be praised, but it must be recognized."

The distinction needs development. The morality of inertia is not in its acquiescence in things, but in its resistance to system, coercion, all the life-destructive violent assertions of the will. It is precisely the work of the mind in modulation to discover at any given moment the strongest source of resistance to the destructive exercises of the will. Such a mind can never come to rest in a system or a position, it must even question its own assurances from time to time. It may be mistaken in its particular judgments, it may take myth for fact, but it is protected from scandal by its conservative conscientiousness about the hubris of the will. Trilling's criticism never shares the righteous indignation of the oppressed not because he is out of sympathy with those who are oppressed, but because he has a special sensitivity to the resentful will that is often masked by righteous indignation. It is the "conservative" or "aristocratic" bias of his criticism. We may understand the "sentiment of being" (a phrase Trilling derived from Wordsworth) in this context. Trilling does not advocate a mindless acquiescence in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brute force of life, but rather the wise passivity of relaxed will as a resistance to its more brutal expressions.

The phases of Trilling's career (represented by *The Middle of the Journey, Matthew Arnold, The Liberal Imagination, Beyond Culture,* and *Sincerity and Authenticity*) are carefully distinguished and discussed by Chace, who wants to show the consistency of this effort to defend self and society against the various guises of the imperial will.

In *The Middle of the Journey,* as we have seen, the encounter with death is more powerful in its resistance to the political absolutisms which beleaguer the liberal "hero" than any political argument he may offer against them. In *Matthew Arnold,* Trilling found a commitment to mind and literature that provided him with another center of resistance to the ideological will. But his own innate gift for modulation enabled him to see the inherent weaknesses and historical limitations of Arnold's thought. Writing in the aftermath of the Enlightenment belief in progress, Arnold envisaged the possibility of a perfect state (the expression of the best self), "standing," in Chace's words, "above all classes and resolving all contradictions." Trilling demurred from this view (calling it "banter") partly because it was unrealistic; it ignored the conditioned (i.e., class character) of social existence. But Trilling also saw in the middle classes a source of valuable resistance to an increasingly powerful modernism, which he was to call in *Beyond Culture* "the adversary culture." (At times he seems almost willing to forgive, if not forget, its philistinism.) If in *The Liberal Imagination* Trilling is very much the Arnoldian or Millian critic, discriminating for example between the higher triumphs of the imagination (e.g., James) and the crudities of a simpleminded realism (e.g., Dreiser), he is capable of finding in the values of art and intellect threats to social life. "The middle class . . . has been losing its love of society," Trilling writes with a note of complaint. There is much to love in community, not at all clear what there is to love in actual society. Trilling himself, I suspect, does not value society as much as he mistrusts the reactive alternatives to it, or rather withdrawals from it: anarchism, even authoritarianism. "Often our anarchism takes the form of disgust with the very idea of society. On the upper levels of our taste this disgust is expressed for us by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Céline, and Kafka." The adversary can be found in the most privileged reaches of art. In *Sincerity and Authenticity,* written against the background of the sixties, Trilling deepens his critique of modernism for its "antimonian reversal of all accepted values, of all received realities." His adversaries are Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, David Cooper,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and R.D. Laing. The effect of their attempt to transvalue values (through erotic revolution and the validation or authenticating of insanity) is to destroy the authority of *character*. But the reduction of *Sincerity and Authenticity* to a polemic against the counterculture fails to acknowledge the extraordinary modulations of the argument. Trilling's last book reads as if he wanted to resist his own will to annihilate the adversary, for the effect of Trilling's historical perspective (including among others Rousseau, Diderot, Goethe, and Jane Austen) is to allow the adversarial view its full claim upon us. Unlike Stalinism, modernism remained an object of deep ambivalance for Trilling.

Chace concludes his study of Trilling with an oblique disparagement of a tendency in contemporary criticism, that has in effect put into question the achievement of "old-fashioned" critics like Trilling and Edmund Wilson. Trilling "reminds us all, and has reminded me for many months in writing this book about him, of something we can never wholly forget: literature is important by virtue not of its textuality but of its entry into our moral lives." It is true that Trilling rarely applied himself to a text in an exhaustive exegetical manner as if all that mattered was the fullest possible understanding of what a text meant or did. Trilling perceives an old adversary in "the masked will" of text: its attempt to dominate the reader through its implicit demand for a suspension of disbelief, a full immersion in the text as it understands itself. In his essay "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," Trilling speaks of the intimidation by the text. Modern criticism "has taught us how to read certain books; it has not taught us how to engage them. Modern literature (it need scarcely be said again) is directed toward moral and spiritual renovation: its doctrine is damnation and salvation. It is a literature of doctrine, which although often concealed is very aggressive. The occasions are few when criticism has met this doctrine on its own fierce terms. Of modern criticism it can be said that it has instructed us in an intelligent passivity before the beneficent aggression of literature. Attributing to literature virtually angelic powers, it has passed the word to readers of literature that the one thing you do not do when you meet an angel is wrestle with him." Trilling's style with its practiced hesitations, its self-regarding convolutions, its capacity to create distance as well as engage is an expression of resistance to textual domination. Works of literature became occasions for speculative understanding about the nature of literature and life, though it should be said that Trilling's literary tact matched and surpassed the capacities of most professional close readers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But there is another tendency in contemporary criticism to which Trilling's achievement implicitly speaks: the tendency to deconstruct and disassemble works of literature in order to discover the linguistic elements of which they are composed. This view of literature rests upon a radical skepticism, if not nihilism, about meaning and reality that Trilling would undoubtedly have experienced as adversarial. Trilling himself, as we have seen, had an abundant capacity for skepticism. It is simply that skepticism never completely defined his intelligence, which remained rooted in convictions about virtue, character, and truth that it had no interest in deconstructing. Trilling's skeptical intelligence served a critical humanism that he questioned only to test and strengthen.

The early chapters of Chace's book deal with Trilling's uneasy, ambivalent relation to his being a Jew. Chace reminds us that Trilling was always sensitive to the "conditioned" nature of existence and that Jewishness was one of the conditions of existence, which he apparently sought to escape or transcend, though he confessed that he owed to his Jewishness his imagination of society. Chace subordinates the theme of Jewishness to what he considers to be a paradox of Trilling's work. Though Trilling always insisted upon the inescapability of conditions, his own manner is usually transcendental and abstract. Trilling was a *clerc* in Julien Benda's sense of the word, a man "who speak[s] to the world in a transcendent manner," even if his message is opposed to abstraction, system, and the unconditioned view of things. Trilling's ambivalence towards Jewishness, however, remains a troubling and interesting question, which Chace does not adequately address, again because he is distant from the experience.

Trilling was only one of a number of New York Jewish intellectuals who needed to liberate themselves from the parochialism of the world in which they grew up. That world is given to us uncritically in stories by sentimental Yiddish writers. It is given to us critically, though with affection, by Alfred Kazin in *Walker in the City*. I don't know much about the particular circumstances of Trilling's early life, so I may be wrong to extrapolate from what I know of the lives of other writers of Trilling's generation and of my own experience. The world of our fathers may have valued intellectual ambition, but it did not provide adequate conditions to foster either the intellect or the creative imagination. (I am not referring simply to the obstacle of anti-Semitism that lay in the path of the Jewish intellectuals of Trilling's generation.) It is, of course, true that a writer may later find in the circumstances of his early life the subject of his art, as Joyce did in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

claustral and paralytic circumstances of Dublin life. But it is sheer sentimentality (to which Joyce never succumbed) to pretend that the life was very nourishing to the intellect. Trilling represented for many Jewish students at Columbia in the forties and fifties (I was one of them) the possibility of entering into a world of letters and cultivation not to be found in the boroughs of New York where we grew up. It is easy retrospectively to take the view that we were all suffering from Jewish self-hatred, but the phrase doesn't accurately encompass the range of experiences of young Jewish intellectuals whose minds were being formed in the thirties, forties, and fifties. I myself don't recall ever feeling ashamed of being Jewish, I even confess to its having been on occasion a source of pride. But I sensed in the books I read, in the teachers I encountered at Columbia another air in which it was possible to breathe another kind of life, richer and more ample. Aspirations of this kind risk snobbery and, worse, self-falsification, but the risk does not discredit the aspiration. A number of Jewish intellectuals, who freed themselves of the parochialism of their origins, rediscovered in later life pleasure and value in their early lives. That Trilling was not one of them has to do with the particularities of temperament and experience.

With incisiveness and elegance (he has learned from Trilling's manner), Chace traces the consistencies and the modulations of Trilling's work. Chace has the distance from Trilling which enables him to see his man with clear-eyed sympathy. Without a trace of hagiolatry, Chace never loses respect for his subject. Whatever agreements and disagreements one may have with Chace's arguments, one must admire the scrupulous spirit of the book.

EUGENE GOODHEART

POETIC SCHEMES

CELESTIAL PANTOMIME: POETIC STRUCTURES OF TRANSCENDENCE. By Justus George Lawler. Yale University Press. $20.

The old formalist truism that poetry is a message whose mode of encoding is part of its meaning is one that literary readers brought up in modernism have been taught to accept and even honor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And yet the more such a notion has become received, mildly but dogmatically, during the past decades, the less the skills of general literary readership have confirmed the belief. Editors of literary quarterlies frequently abandon to "poetry editors" (whose own expertise they have no means of evaluating) decisions about verse. This cannot be because they feel themselves incompetent to recognize authenticity, power, truth, importance, wit, and so forth; it is rather that they feel a jagged right-hand edge to be "unjustified" in more ways than one, to be part of some Mystery, its top lost in a conceptual altitude but covered to the waist in muddied waters. The mere condition of verse seems upsetting to the critical sense of responsibility, but something called "poetry" continues to draw professions of faith.

Contemporary attitudes towards and critical encounters with the canonical poetic texts of the modernist period—some Yeats, Eliot, Pound, a little Frost, less Stevens, Williams, some Lowell—remain similar to many of the attitudes of those modernists' own philistine contemporaries toward their canon—Browning, Arnold, Tennyson and particularly Rossetti and Swinburne (although all this is attenuated somewhat by the fact that nobody—save for a few good poets—memorizes much great poetry any more). The formal rightness or authenticity of a quoted passage, then as now, was assumed, but mostly unexperienced. In actual rhetorical practice, contemporary literary intellectuals write as if they held the most static and primitive views of "content" and "form," feeling at best that applications of the latter were like a kind of emotive seasoning serving to point up or elicit realms of "feeling" implicit in the semantic stuff of language.

There are a few conventional and available exceptions. In the matter of rhyme in Augustan verse, for example, a brilliant essay by W.K. Wimsatt ("One Relation of Rhyme to Reason") was in all the training manuals, as it were. It made even literal-minded readers aware of the ways in which what they had thought was a historically understandable convention, something piously but uncritically approved of as supplying "structure" (or even a vague symbol, in its very presence, of "order") was more specifically significant. This specifiable, and intense, significance of "form" is something that poets in the past have felt and known and even, on occasion, didactically shown. Poets as radically different as Ben Jonson and John Keats, let alone Gerald Manley Hopkins, have interpreted rhyming itself, the relation between two words linked by sound of common ending, as a figure variously of marriage or bondage, of teamwork, or of master-slave; other analogies—of text and interpreter or of patient and surgeon—arise within poems to specify an ad hoc relation of the meanings

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of words jointly condemned by nature and the poet to phonemic association. Almost every element of poetic form or structure is enlisted, in all true poetry, in the cause of just such demonstrable signification. Most readers of poetry leave this matter, its exemplification and even its recognition, up to the way structuralists talk.

It is important to observe the milieu of literary fashion that currently surrounds the reader of literature in verse. In the past—even slightly after World War II, standards of literacy and eloquence generally being of a higher sort—it was accepted that prose and verse were rhetorical schemes or patterns, that being able to write good light or occasional verse did not entail any aspiration to poetry, and that true poetry, *modern* poetry, had to be problematic, formally speaking. That is, it had to define itself away from sentimental jingle by means of free verse or something like it (terribly archaistic and allusive formal schemes, for irony's sake). But then an inept, flabby free verse became in the 1960s—probably as a result of the "creative writing" industry in American colleges and high schools—the contemporary equivalent of greeting card verse jingle. This paralleled the way in which a crude and trivial veneer of weak irony has become the popular form of poetic sentimentality: where Reverie was, Experience is. A few older journalists (like, say, Red Smith, whose prose style and general level of verbal culture are among the most distinguished on *The New York Times* staff), and a few well-educated nonprofessional writers can still probably write a good, sharp jingle. But the avatars of yesterday's ambitious jinglers write today what I have elsewhere called "clunk"; strings of flat, arbitrarily chopped off lines (save for a crudely ironic enjambment or two, trotted out with the masked unease of a stand up comic). Free verse was, for Pound or Williams or Lawrence, harder to write, harder to get the formal point of when you read it, and more literary in its allusiveness (to biblical prose, to translated ancient and eastern wisdom, even—and this is most important—to older forms of verse, being a kind of revised version of some other structure, although not immediately recognizable as such to any but another poet or the most sensitive and eloquent of critics of verse).

For American modernist poetry, free verse became as well something like the flag of the Whitmanic disposition—that sad piety of the literalist about Whitman's guises and disguises, embodying such a wretched travesty of his imaginative genius. But, of course, fashion induces habit, and habit weakens art and other noble work. Today, *good* free verse is as hard to write as ever. Even though most aspiring poets write nothing but free verse, and more young people have been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hopefully but irresponsibly encouraged to purport to be poets than ever before, there is no greater yield of really distinguished first books of verse than there was twenty-five years ago. But, as Karl Kraus once said of aphorisms, a poem is easy to write if you don't know how. And today most people don't know how in formlessness, whereas in other times they didn't know how in rhyme, which is why Chaucer or Jonson or Shelley could call hacks "rhymers." Ours are all clunkers. For although most verse of literary pretensions is actually no more than quotidian journalism—feature stories of the casual diarist, sentimental and/or ironic jottings, unsent letters to the editor of publications long since defunct, urban nature writing seldom even urbane—it has been driven to seek refuge in very little magazines nobody reads, newspapers and general interest weeklies having gradually disappeared. The little magazines, whose embattled smallness still symbolizes the height and advancement of the cultural standards they fly, have, in ironic historical fact, become the repository, in good part, of unprofitable literary *schlock*.

A good many promising young poets of two or three decades ago showed their potential power if not in premature revelations of their imaginations, at least in displays of rhetorical skill and training. They started out with a knowledge of certain ground rules, so to speak: good verse of any kind is a necessary condition for poetry. But it is not a sufficient one (the kindergarten texts for this being Sidney's and Shelley's defenses, Emerson's "The Poet," Whitman *passim*, and so on); it is strange that this last has been so hard a lesson to learn (for British reviewers today, for example, who think that poetry consists in Writing Well and Concisely with a Lot of Striking Metaphors that Engage Feeling). True, anyone interested in the future of literate culture would prefer poetasters who chose as models versifiers of the superb skills of John Betjeman and Philip Larkin, and who at least want to Try and Get It Right, than those who today tirelessly and tiresomely grind away at forgeries of a coin with no head, and a tail so worn down that anything looks like it. And one might then teach (as the modernists did) that poetry uses, but does not consist of, verse, without knowing—as one invariably does with an undergraduate or even graduate class today—that, at best, one was only going to be able to get half the story across.

The essential point for poetry, though, is not that poetic content inhabits or is authenticated by form. Even the formalists' dream of being able to infer, from The Ultimate Analysis, everything that was being said from the way it was put, tends to neglect the diachronic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dimension along which formal devices work—the shifting patterns of historical allusiveness which make a genuine poem's relation to a form a revisionary, and hence an original, one. The very epistemological grounds on which we build a concept of "form" lie over a grievous fault: constant tremors make them shift. The classical rhetoricians distinguished between "scheme"—or figure of speech—and "trope"—or figure of thought. That "speech"-"thought" opposition is logically shaky in its own right. But the notion of a pattern—such as rhyme, alliteration, line length, strophic variation, syntactic rearrangement, repetitions—does seem to be a matter of something lying on the surface of poetic utterance, or part of its frame. Metaphor, metonymy, irony—even the revisionary and metaphor-like (the rhetorician's term to use for this would be "transumptive") character of some kinds of allusiveness—on the other hand, seem more to inhere in the depth of the picture.

The true poet, rather than the versifying journalist, employs scheme as trope ("structure as metaphor," as the language of 1955 might have had it). Great poetry is always making a kind of parable of its formal structures. There are the moral implications of presiding decisions (Milton's defense of his own blank verse in *Paradise Lost,* Blake's ironic revisions of it *Jerusalem,* Hopkins's "technical" prosodic vocabulary, Whitman's metaphors of oceanic rhythms for his long and short lines, and all of what Robert Frost talks about in "The Figure a Poem Makes"). Then there are the momentary, ad hoc figurations which a particular pattern will form, and whose moral lies in the region of its occurrence. Thus, a chiasmus or crisscross can be found in the vowel patterns of "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan" (ah-oo-oo-ah), but we feel it to be decorative or schematic; whereas in Frost's line in "Spring Pools" about "These flowery waters and these watery flowers," the central trope of reflection, mirroring, the transformations of the seen into the known, and so forth, is here made to be the meaning of chiasmus itself. And when we are told of Satan's thoughts in *Paradise Lost* Book IV that stir "The hell within him, for within him hell/He brings," the crisscross pattern means even more than that, engaging not only reversals, but externalizations and interior versions, literal, localized hells and figurative "withins."

Justus George Lawler's *Celestial Pantomime* is a brilliant, powerful, very learned, insistent, and madly energetic exposition of how poetic scheme becomes, with true poets, trope. He investigates many of the ways in which poetry makes fables out of its own specific and general form. These are not so much the General Fable of Making, as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we might call it, of the commitment of trained skill to serious work that the very assumption of form contracts with the reader for. Lawler is concerned rather with all of the devices and effects which so much literary criticism—at least, of the practical kind—uncritically consigns to the domain of "music," while remaining tone-deaf to their meanings, and content to observe that they keep the poem from being bare of rhythmic interest. Lawler's broad command of poetic texts in English is dazzling, as is his ability to focus very narrowly on a pattern which even a structurally proficient reader might overlook. For example, he can dwell fascinatingly on a matter like that of augmenting or diminishing syllabic structures in a particular syntactic pattern: thus the crescendo of "The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild" versus the diminuendo (again from Keats) of "The weariness, the fever, and the fret." But in neither of these cases is he content to make a hit-and-run diagnosis, as it were, muttering something about how the patterns—if noticed at all—might be performing "symbolic action" or be "imitating the meaning of the line." He learned early from Empson, Wimsatt, and Burke how to go that far and beyond. Or again, in the matter of enjambment: this is now generally understood by sophisticated commentators to be not so much a matter of "musical" variation of rhythm and pace as—since Milton made it a scheme of revisionary discovery in the verse of *Paradise Lost*—a way of teaching a reader something about his or her own habits of expectation. Lawler's discussion of enjambment leaps beyond that of the best commentators on it to date: he finds new roles for enjambment in various contexts (for example, occasions of a sole run-over line in an otherwise end-stopped sequence which can imply erotic embrace). Lawler's poetic journey takes him through a forest of schemes, and the book would be valuable enough for its specific readings, its curious associations, its wit, its sophistication about the recent history of critical theory, and its Burkean ability to adduce a low-comic or contemporary political analogue of a rhetorical pattern: in a spectacular passage, he compares the operations of self-consciousness in the famous repetition of "forlorn" in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" to an instance of a politician gesturing on television and becoming aware of the nature of the movement of his hand.

But there is more to this remarkable book. Its subtitle, *Poetic Structures of Transcendence*, points to Lawler's interest not in the psychology of reading or (although he speaks more often to this) of writing, or even in a familiar sense of historical process. His last concerns are theological; the enormous shadows cast by poetic figura-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion for him lie beyond language and its capacities for self-interpretation. For Hopkins's "*The world* is charged with the grandeur of God" Lawler revises "*The word,*" not the unrevised old Logos, but the poet's language; word becomes for him Word, eventually, but not by anything like the processes of baroque epigrammatic wit, for example. In one sense, this whole book can be considered an ultimate act of comprehending Hopkins, and of going beyond the limitations of his theories of meter and music. Hopkins's very prosodic vocabulary treated the rhythmic consequences of the English language's unique relation between word-accent and syntax, which have made it such an energetic language for poetry, as ontological and psychological parables. Lawler has coped with the inscape of many other sorts of pattern: his ear and eye for arrangement and for What Might Be Going on There are always open in a kind of shrewd adoration. One might characterize this book's temper by saying that while it does not necessarily view the idea of the Merely Decorative as wholly the devil's work, it does regard treating as if it were wallpaper, or Muzak, a troped scheme—a device of form itself made parabolic—as a sin. As, in fact, an interpretive murder, or an analogue of treating a person as a thing, or a work of art as a package of marketability.

The poets Lawler cites most frequently are Wordsworth, Keats, Milton, Hopkins, Yeats, Browning, Coleridge, Blake, Donne, and Stevens. This is not surprising, given their greatness, and the fascinating interplay of oral and scribal forces always at work in their formal schemes. (For some reason, Whitman, Frost, and Hart Crane, all of whom provide realms of instances, never come up at all.) The organization of his book implicitly invokes a mythology of *poesis* and suggests that the "celestial pantomime" of his Stevensian title should perhaps have been *The Creation as the Letter C*—the chapter headings, and the classification of his patterns are all designated by single words beginning with *C*. The sequence of terms "Canon," "Commerce," "Caprice," "Clue," "Culmination," "Collision" unrolls in itself a little fable about reading and interpretation by its implied succession of phased modes of textual attention. Hopkins-like, Lawler imports into his apparatus tropes of something beyond it—all these energetic instances of *C* as the broken circle of perfection, as well as the modern hermeneutic one, broken by nature (but thereby allowing light to get in, or a handhold for grasping the otherwise slippery entity). And yet nowhere in the text does an idiosyncratic apparatus, a collection of gestures masquerading as technical terms, get in the way of exposition, or of the interpretation which emanates from it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This sense of the celestial pantomime which form enacts on the imagination's stage has already disturbed some reviewers. This is not a book which will appeal to a literalist of any kind, whether made uneasy by matters of belief that cannot be written off as questions of ideology and conceptual convention, or by the kind of reader trained to deal with poetry as stylistics, and for whom the figures which Lawler loves can never be figurative but only literal—never emblems, but at most ingenious arabesques.

JOHN HOLLANDER

LOVE AND POLITICS

COMRADE AND LOVER: ROSA LUXEMBERG'S LETTERS TO LEO JOGICHES. Edited by Elżbieta Ettinger. MIT Press. $12.50.

"Alas, I'm no Jungfrau . . . I'm just an ordinary kitten."
—Rosa Luxemburg, 1898

Can this be Rosa Luxemburg—the Polish-Jewish revolutionary who cofounded one political party (the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, 1893), led another (the German Social Democratic Party), and inspired a third (the German Communist Party), and who died the victim of a sensational political assassination in 1919—this coaxing and clinging woman clucking diminutives at her lover? Despite the astonishment at first picking up Elżbieta Ettinger's selection of Rosa's letters to her first and greatest love, fellow revolutionary Leo Jogiches, one is forced to say yes; yet there is an optical illusion.

First, the letters contained in *Comrade and Lover*, written from 1893 to 1914, constitute only a tenth of the letters from Rosa to Leo—a somewhat enigmatic figure whose letters to her have not been preserved—and a fraction of her vast correspondence. Second, they have been chosen in order to reveal the personal rather than the political, or at least the political only insofar as it illuminates the individual and the sentimental. That Rosa Luxemburg had a heart, and a great one, there is no doubt. That she carried on with Leo

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jogiches an intriguing affair with many dimensions emerges from a close reading of these letters. What might not be evident to the general reader, however, is the immense, deep ocean of political thought and experience from which these fragments float up to the surface. Rosa Luxemburg has been somewhat slighted both by political writers today and by the women's movement, possibly because of her ambivalence towards the feminism of her own time but also because few books about her are available in our language and for that reason this volume is particularly welcome.* But the story of her passionate, long-term affair with Leo Jogiches risks putting her in a false light if it is not viewed from the perspective of the intellectual and historical circumstances in which it occurred.

For three years, Rosa was voluntarily under Leo's intellectual guidance, and she consulted him about everything she wrote and did for the rest of her life. Leo edited and sometimes reworked her manuscripts. Often she seems to have turned to him in a quite slavish manner. But Rosa's discipleship was both a reality and an illusion. Certainly in her early years of political apprenticeship in Paris and Berlin, she was eager to be a star pupil. One must remember, however, that didacticism played a major role in many lives devoted to socialism in the period. Both Rosa and Leo believed in education, the education of leaders and of masses.

Rosa has been criticized for theorizing about the "spontaneous" uprising of the masses, but it seems that often she considered these only progressive steps towards the final revolutionary actions. Mass actions, in order to be effective, had to be conscious, rational, organized. Although she eschewed the kind of masterminded, elitist avant-garde party leadership Lenin advocated, Rosa was not immune to the need for forces within and without the proletariat that would give direction to the whole movement. This embryonic sense of a dialectic of guidance surely influenced Rosa and Leo, despite their obstinate, willful personalities, to try to direct each other in ordinary day-to-day living. The ideal character of the conception is evident in this remarkable passage on reciprocal "control":

> Dyodyo, my beloved! How badly I need you! How badly we need each other! By God, no other couple has a task like ours: to shape a human being out of each other . . . in order not to lose the overall

*An excellent two-volume biography by J.P. Nettl does exist (Oxford University Press, 1966).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> sense of existence that I believe is a life committed outward, constructive action, creative work, one needs the control of another human being. (July 3, 1900)

Thus if there was something subservient in Rosa's tenacious clinging to Leo Jogiches's masterful molding of her mind, it was all to the good, for it allowed her to obtain exactly what she needed in order to develop. If this blond lion wanted to be an *éminence grise*, then she would exploit his help. At the same time, as his nominal "wife,"* Rosa did not hesitate to draw on Jogiches for material support, writing him about hats and dresses she needed in order to be "decent" in her public appearances, but also using the money to create free time in which to write. Undoubtedly she reasoned that by financing her, Leo was financing the cause.

This ambiguity of "roles" weaves in and out of the entire relationship and the correspondence it inspired. Rosa accepts the sacrifices she must make on the altar of political life (responsibilities, journeys, and intervals of prison life almost constantly separate the lovers), but at the same time she rebels. Although she knows that revolutionary activity is what finally binds them together, she wonders aloud at one point whether God will punish her for her neglect of the joys of everyday life. Since most of all Leo wants to be her mentor, to spur her on to becoming one of the best political thinkers, writers, speakers, and agitators in Germany and Poland in the first decade of the century, she charges that master-disciple relationship with all of the postponed eros and genuine love that she feels for him. Discussions of strategy and tactics, news of activities of the press, reactions to Leo's editing, gossip about maneuvers among party leaders take on a shimmering, iridescent quality from the dark streams flowing just beneath them.

Even in her role as disciple, however, Rosa always keeps the upper hand, as she did in most of her personal and personal-political relations. From the onset of their affair, Rosa is driven to attempt to dominate Leo Jogiches, to compel him to act as she thinks he should, to keep him available to her in every way, and to draw him to her physically and emotionally. There is never a moment of abdication. There is, instead, a developing set of strategies for accomplishing this union through space and time by means of letters and despite obstacles of every kind. While Leo directs Rosa toward the content of her

*(Jogiches, a wealthy Lithuanian Jew who discretely gave large sums to the German Social Democratic Party, was to all purposes Rosa's husband, although she had had to marry a relative stranger in order to obtain German citizenship.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political life and writings, she tries to bring out a practicality and concreteness in him that are far from being his most conspicuous qualities. When he fails to finish his doctoral dissertation (hers becomes a university textbook in Poland), she reproves him. When he wavers about coming to join her permanently in Berlin, she gets furious and pretends to turn against him. As early as 1895, we find her threatening and cajoling aggressively, declaring she will conquer him with the force of her love and "terrorize" him until he measures up to what she expects.

As bitterly as she opposed the theory on a political level, Rosa practiced opportunism in love. She takes what she needs and wants from Leo—always, however, comparing their relationship to the ideal one in her head and striving to make the former fit the latter. But when she returns to Berlin from prison in 1906 to find Kostia Zetkin, the son of her friend and comrade Clara, assigned to her apartment by the Party, she takes him as a lover. (It should be said, in all fairness, that Leo seems to have had a liaison while in the underground which came to Rosa's attention.) From the photographs accompanying the letters, it seems that this short, lame, not particularly attractive but passionate and magnetic woman had at least two handsome, dashing lovers.

Thus Rosa Luxemburg tended to be autonomous, but within the framework of her relationships she expressed a dependency she found perfectly natural and even a little alluring. She would pay any price to hold on *materially* to the man she loved. In doing so, she does not seem to have betrayed her conception of female nature. If Rosa's vision of the masses shifted and was full of nuances (especially since she saw them as "subjectivity," a psychic ocean conditioned by violent changes), her image of womanhood was even more elusive. Not only was she a sentimental supporter of marriage and the family (she wryly recounts advising a young German worker at a rally to marry against his own objections to marriage as a hypocritical institution); she actually spoke sometimes as if women were weak—albeit in charming ways—and singularly suited for the home. As late as 1917, she bragged in a letter to Hans Diefenbach about how she had triumphed over Camille Huysman, a Belgian socialist, by appearing helpless and dreamy and by exhibiting:

> My eternal need for a guardian who would take care of my ticket, stick me on the right train and retrieve my lost handbags—in short . . . all those shameful weaknesses which have given you so many happy moments.*

*(*The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, S.E. Bronner, ed., Westview Press, 1978, p.213.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rosa seems to have regarded the whole question of being a woman with a humorousness that might have masked a theoretical insecurity; or perhaps she was never troubled by the question, eager only to attain suffrage rights for proletarian women whom she felt would surely vote to overthrow the oppressive capitalist regimes of Europe. Later in life, she urged her women friends to have independent opinions, but never seems to have felt threatened herself. Her cockiness even went so far as to have allowed her once to claim jokingly that she and Clara were the only "men" left in the Party.

Rosa could be playful only because she had such a sure sense of herself as a woman needing a man and needing to live with him. In her acceptance of her own personal needs, there is a refreshing quality, a lack of psychological turbulence and terminology. While on the one hand she assumed that a woman could do anything a man could, she also delighted in cultivating those eccentricities strictly characterizing her sex. Hannah Arendt was not particularly interested in Rosa's womanhood, but she does stress, in her essay in the *New York Review of Books* (October 6, 1966), how oddly confident this revolutionary felt in the high echelons of German political life despite the fact that she was a foreigner and a Jew, thanks to the assumptions and precepts of the exquisitely educated Eastern European "peer group" Rosa belonged to in her native Poland. If Arendt is right, this background may have contributed to making her feel comfortable as a woman, as well.

However, it is more likely that Rosa's own brand of Marxist theory influenced her in this matter. It must have seemed obvious to her that women were just as powerful and intelligent as men, just as naturally leaders. Like the masses, they had only to be given the barest chance to express themselves and they would take over their rightful roles in the universe. Indeed, the Jewish background may have contributed some of the more conventional and limiting elements in her vision—the intensely *bürgerlich* conception of family life ("settl[ing] down in a truly middle class fashion," as she puts it.) At one point Rosa even remarked to Leo, with a certain feigned bitterness, how envious she was of other women in their circle who dominated their husbands and were treated so well by them.

But if there was a touch of the Jewish princess in Rosa, she also had the correct perception that time was extremely limited, happiness quite hazardously meted out, and events increasingly dramatic and perilous. Were they, she must have wondered, to have anything at all, ever to be together? Indeed, she and Leo were reunited in 1902 but only for a few years during which time she traveled all over Europe and even spent three months in prison. The Russian Revolution of 1905 sent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jogiches back clandestinely to Warsaw. Between December, 1905 and March, 1906, the two were reunited, but then both were arrested. Despite the vicissitudes of their private lives after 1907 they stayed closely in touch and there was a kind of sentimental rapprochement in Rosa's last years. The assassinations of Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were followed a few months later by that of Jogiches, who had lingered in Berlin specifically to protest and possibly avenge Rosa's death. If Rosa's political dream was smashed with the temporary demise of German social democracy at the signing of the war credits on August 4, 1914, her personal dream came to seem equally unrealizable within the historical context of her own life.

LYNNE LAWNER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE OXFORD BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Chosen by

V.S. PRITCHETT

Spanning 200 hundred years, from the early 19th century to the present, this international collection of short stories written in English represents some of the most original examples of the genre. Many stories that have been over anthologized have not been included in favor of those which have been overlooked. Writers include Sherwood Anderson, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Ring Lardner, D.H. Lawrence, Doris Lessing, Flannery O'Connor, O Henry, Sir Walter Scott, John Updike, and Eudora Welty. 750 pp., $19.95

IN ANGER

British Culture in the Cold War 1945-60

ROBERT HEWISON

Part of a multivolume cultural survey of Great Britain, this sequel to Hewison's widely acclaimed *Under Siege* focuses on theater and film, discussing such topics as the Ealing comedies in film; novelists like Kingsley Amis, John Braine, and Alan Sillitoe; and playwrights including John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, and Harold Pinter. 250 pp., illus., $19.95

PLACES

An Anthology of Britain

Chosen by

RONALD BLYTHE

In this unusually personal anthology, over forty novelists, poets, naturalists, and historians vividly recall places in the British Isles that have particular significance to them. From the countryside of Oxfordshire to the Black Mountains of Wales, these writers recall scenes from childhood, an hour in church, wartime London, and more. Contributors include Jan Morris, Jon Stallworthy, Sir John Betjeman. Photographs and paintings visually evoke the collection. 270 pp., illus., $19.95

WRITING WITH POWER

Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process

PETER ELBOW

Addressing everyone from students to professional writers, Elbow describes techniques for getting words on paper, revising, achieving power, reaching an audience, and for getting feedback. "An engagingly honest and persuasive treatise, full of ingenious ideas." – Howard Nemerov. 365 pp., $19.95/$6.95

At your bookstore, or send your check to:

OXFORD University Press

SINCE 1478

Prices subject to change

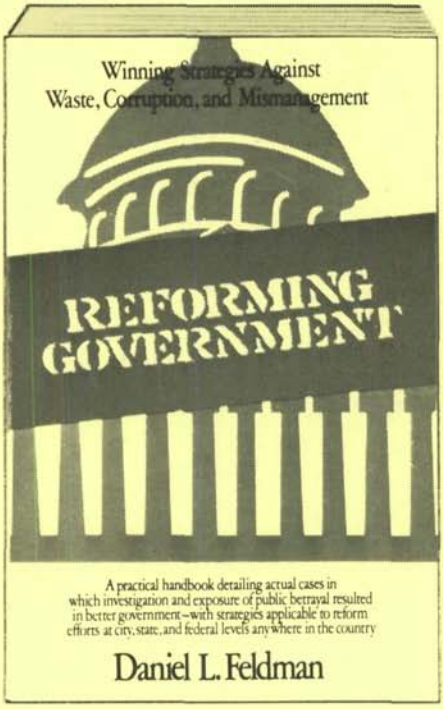
Box 900-81-076 200 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You can fight the vested interests– and win.

Waste, corruption, and mismanagement at any level of government can be effectively combatted—if you understand how the system works and what tools you need to change it. That's precisely the information that a veteran legislative aide gives you in this practical, step-by-step handbook. Getting the facts, building support, implementing the change—it's all in this "fine, fine book."—Jack Newfield, *Village Voice*

"A valuable book that deserves a wide audience."—David B. Truman, author of *Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*


Winning Strategies Against
Waste, Corruption, and Mismanagement
REFORMING GOVERNMENT
A practical handbook detailing actual cases in which investigation and exposure of public betrayal resulted in better government—with strategies applicable to reform efforts at city, state, and federal levels anywhere in the country
Daniel L. Feldman

At booksellers, or direct from the publisher:

WILLIAM MORROW
Dept. PAL: PR
105 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016

Please send me_____copy(ies) of REFORMING GOVERNMENT @ $5.95 paperback, $11.95 hardcover. I enclose ☐ check ☐ money order in the amount of $_____. (Add $1.00 per copy for postage and handling plus sales tax where applicable.)

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

PARTISAN REVIEW
Published at Boston University

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED